PHILOSOPHICAL DISSERTATIONS

ON THE

GREEKS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

OF

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PRIVATE READER TO FREDERIC II. KING OF PRUSSIA.

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CONTENTS

OF THE

SECOND VOLUME.

THIRD PART.

SECT. VI. STATE OF CIVILIZATION AMONG THE ATHENIANS.

Page

FORMATION OF TRIBUNALS . . . 1

Number of judges—Abolition of petty courts of justice—Tribunal of the Heliastes—Ostracism.

CONCERNING SOLON . . 8

His character—Place of birth—Taste for poesy—Spirit of his laws.

GENIUS OF THE ATHENIAN ORATORS . . 12

Of Æschines—Andocides—Demosthenes—Lysias—Lycurgus—Characteristics of Athenian eloquence.

SOURCE OF DISCORD AMONG THE GREEKS . 17

Contests relative to commerce and navigation—The Phaselites—Frauds in working the mines—Metallic court—Satyrical names—Actions for defamation.

CAUSES OF THE GRANDEUR AND DECLINE OF THE AREOPAGUS 21

Falsification of the laws of Solon—Manner of procedure of the Areopagus—Number of its members.

ACCUSATIONS OF IMPIETY AMONG THE ATHENIANS 27

Tribunal of the king of sacrifices—Phrine the courtesan accused of impiety—Mutilation of the Hermæ—Andocides—Errors of Plato—Innocence of Socrates.

ON HEMLOCK AND THE COMMUTATION OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENTS INTO PECUNIARY FINES 33

Effects of hemlock—Procedure in the criminal courts—Torture—Barbarity of punishments—Of Infamy.

INSTITUTIONS RELATIVE TO PUBLIC SECURITY 37

Formation of the night-watch—Wearing arms—Police—Origin of beggary—maintenance of orphans and of old men—Law against idlers—Militia of boys—Pirates—Greek monks—Present devastation of Attica.

SECT. VII. ON THE STATE OF THE FINE-ARTS AT ATHENS.

ON PAINTING AND THE VENUS OF COS AND OF GNIDUS 45

Polygnotus—Origin of historical painting—Scarcity of fine models—Superiority of the Venus of Praxitiles over that of Apelles—The Helen of Zeuxis—Paintings of Polygnotus—Of perspective.

ON ETHOGRAPHY AND THE CHOICE OF SUBJECTS IN GREEK PAINTINGS . . 53

Superiority of Polygnotus in ethography—Incapacity of Zeuxis—Different kinds of historical painting—Expression of terror and pity—Statue of Laocoon—Tragedy of Eumenides—Virgil and Homer—Of the Graceful style—Painting by Ætion—Judgement of that piece—Of the licentious style—Nakedness of the statues.

PRINCIPAL SCHOOLS OF PAINTING IN GREECE, AND THE ART OF ENGRAVING INVENTED BY VARRO . . . 63

School of Rhodes—Encaustic painting—Schools of Athens and Sicyon—Grecian outline—Country of the great painters—Causes of the superiority of the Greeks in the arts—On the manner of engraving invented by Varro—Origin of printing—Geographical charts.

APOGRAPHS, OR WORKS COPIED AND SUPPOSED 69

Mercury at Athens employed as a model—Commerce in statues—Polycletus—Venus of Medicis—Manner in which that statue was copied—Frauds with regard to statues, paintings and books—Market called the Libraries—Nature of Greek compilations—Impositions with supposed books—Copied paintings—Several original paintings on the same subjects—Fables related by the mystagogues of Greece.

STATUES OF THE GREEKS EXECUTED IN GOLD AND IVORY . . . 75

Minerva of Phidias—Manner in which it was executed—Effect of that statue—required to be sprinkled with water—Coffer of Cypselus—Olympian Jupiter --Dimensions—Genius of the Greeks in works of ostentation.

MUSIC OF THE GREEKS . . . 82

Different epochs of music--Its effects on savages—On the marvellous of Grecian music—Nations supposed to excell in music—Construction of musical instruments—Bœotian reeds—Theban flute—Grecian lyre —Vocal music—Poetic harmony.

ON ARCADIA . . . 88

Situation of that country—Genius of the Arcadians—Vocal powers—Opinion of Polybius refuted—Invention of the cithern in Arcadia--Qualities of that instrument—Revolution in Arcadia.

INTRODUCTION OF MUSIC INTO TRAGEDY, AND THE DEFECTIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE GREEK THEATRES . . 95

Melopœia--Instruments used there—Want of nature in the lyric tragedies—Interruption of theatrical exhibitions—Judges of the theatres—Taste of the Athenians for dramatic poetry—their success in that art.

PHILOSOPHICAL SECTS, AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE GRAMMARIANS ON GRECIAN LITERATURE 100

Ana-

Analogy of the sects with different physical constitutions—Sudden impulses of the disciples—Cynics—their policy and system—Newton—Platonists—Modern visionaries and juglers—System of Epicurus—Style of the Epicureans—Grammarians—Their catalogue of classical books—Evils attending that operation—Religious disputes—Causes which plunged the Greeks into barbarism.

SECT. VIII. GOVERNMENT AND RELIGION OF THE ATHENIANS.

POLITICAL CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC. 113

Genius of the Athenians—Rivality of the Lacedæmonians—evils it occasioned—Epoch of the establishment of real Democracy at Athens—Extinction of Republics in Europe—Election of the Archons—Senate of five hundred—Public repasts of the Prytanes—Laocracy—Ecclesiastical money—System of Pericles—Influence of the Athenian orators—Demosthenes—Philip of Macedon—Battle of Cheronaea—Fundamental maxims of the republic—Temerity of the Athenians—Expedition against Sicily—Causes of the ruin of Athens.

DEFECTS IN THE CONFEDERATION OF THE GREEK STATES. 129

Little influence of the Amphictyons—Different Amphictyonic nations—Power of some, and weakness of others—Superstition of the Amphictyons—Holy wars—Political evils produced by the defects of the confederation—Causes of the destruction of the Greek republics—Errors of modern writers respecting the Amphictyons.

RELIGION OF THE ATHENIANS, AND THE ORACLES OF DELPHI AND DODONA . 136

First habitation of the ancient Greeks—Thesprotia and Chaomia—Mount Tmarus—Acorns and beech-mast—In what manner the oaks were prophetic—Origin of the oracle of Delphi—Causes of its destruction—Policy of the first Roman emperors.

FATIDICAL BOOK OF THE ATHENIANS . 147

This

This volume was called the TESTAMENT—*Analogy with the books of the Sybils—Silence with respect to it—Conjectures concerning it.*

MYSTERIES OF CERES . . . 147

Tax on the initiated—Extravagance of the Courtesans at Eleusis—Nocturnal debauches—Secret of the religious ceremonies revealed—Law of the Thebans against the Mysteries—Their pernicious effects—Frauds of the Priests—Objections they could not remove—Fables relative to the arrival of Ceres at Eleusis—Character of the Hierophantes—Priest Callias—Grand mysteries—Ablutions in the Ilissus—Penitence and procession of the initiated—Worship of Bacchus combined with that of Ceres—Passion of the Athenians for religious feasts—Observations on the origin of Agriculture—Of the two original nations of Greece.

PART IV.

SECT. IX. ON THE LACEDÆMONIANS.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON THIS PEOPLE 161

Avidity for spoils—Ignorance of the Greeks relative to Lycurgus—Origin of the Lacedæmonian government—Dyarchy, or double royalty—Establishment of the Ephori—Kings of the race Agidae and Eurypontidae—Lycurgus no original genius—His institutions copied from those of Crete—Their spirit and cruelty.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF LACONIA . 169

Valley of the Eurotas—Environs of Amyclæ—Harbour of Gytheum—Soil of Laconia—Coast of Maleatis—Of cape Taenarus—Number of towns in Laconia—Their devastation by continual wars—Population—Island of Cithera—Character of the Islanders—Natural productions of Laconia—Conquest of that country by the Spartans—Origin of that people—Period of emigration.

MANNER

MANNER IN WHICH LACONIA WAS TREATED BY THE SPARTANS AFTER THE CONQUEST . 181

Destruction of Helos—Origin of Helotism—Loss of privileges in the towns of Laconia—Division of lands—Impossibility of establishing equality of fortune.

CAUSES OF THE GRANDEUR AND DECLINE OF LACEDÆMON . . . 185

Importance of Messenia—Its influence on the political equilibrium of Greece.—Conquest of that country by the Spartans, and the additional power it occasioned to Lacedæmon.

RICHES OF LACEDÆMON AND COVETOUSNESS OF THE SPARTANS. . . . 190

Ransom of prisoners taken in war—Spoils amassed in military expeditions—Use of gold and silver at Lacedæmon—Axiom of king Archidamus—Booty taken in the battle of Platææ—Treason of Pausanias—Ancient money of Sparta—Lysander—Venality of the Ephori—Sums of money given by the Persians to the Lacedæmonians—Disorder in the finances of Sparta—Causes of that disorder—Law of Epitades.

MILITARY EXPLOITS OF THE SPARTANS 202

Their shameful repulse before Argos—Venality of their kings—combat at Thermopylæ—Battle of Platææ—Thrasydiles—Real signification of that term—Tyrtæus—Ignorance of the Spartans, in attacking fortified places—Superiority of the Macedonian phalanx over that of Sparta—Laconic dress and armour—Reform attempted by Cleomenes.

EMPIRE OF THE SEA . . . 215

Counsel of Alcibiades—Naval expences among the Greeks—Naval battle at Gnidus—Consequences of that event—Passion of the Greeks for maritime expeditions—Antiquity of the marine of Lacedæmon—Expedition to Samos.

SECT. X. MANNERS OF THE LACEDÆMONIANS.

WOMEN OF SPARTA . . . 221

Their cowardice—Dress—Corruptness of their manners—The Parthenies—Widows appearing on the theatre—Causes of this dissoluteness in the women of Sparta—The Andromanes—Sapphic love—Leap of Leucas—Luxury of the Spartan women—Its influence on celibacy—Dowers of the Lacedæmonians.

MILITARY EDUCATION OF THE LACEDAEMONIANS. 233

Combats of children—Instinct of the male infants—Revolution in their character—Pyrrhic dance—Rural education—Different classes of children educated in common—Concerning the Mothaces, the Trophimes and the Bastards—Military songs—Anapæstic verse—Effects of the military songs—Massacre of the Helots—Cunning theft—Ignorance of the Lacedæmonians—Fustigation of children—

CHARACTER OF THE LACEDAEMONIANS 244

Origin of Laconism—Obstacles to civilization at Sparta—Civil intolerance—Spirit of the Cretan laws—Taste for traffic—Fraudulent disposition of the Spartans—Cause of their perversity—King Agesilaus—Desire of booty—Effects of Laconic education—Custom of appearing naked in the gymnasia—Subtility of genius.

PUBLIC REPASTS OF THE LACEDAEMONIANS 257

Luxury of these feasts—Their origin and effects.

INTERIOR STATE OF THE TOWN OF LACEDAEMON 262

Temple of brass—Theatre—Portico of the Persians and the Caryatides—The Pœcile—Commerce of Lacedæmon—Extent of the town—Great earthquake which destroyed Sparta—Nature of the subterraneous fires in Greece—Ruins of Lacedæmon.

SECT. XI. GOVERNMENT OF LACEDÆMON.

LYCURGUS AND THE USE OF UNWRITTEN LAWS 273

Politics of the kings and the ephori—Defects of verbal laws—Authority of the old men—Lycurgus ignorant of letters—Little progress of the Greeks in historical criticism; Machiavelism of the Spartans.

ANALYSIS OF THE LACEDAEMONIAN GOVERNMENT 279

The Helotes—Tributary inhabitants of Laconia—Spartans of the doric race—Nature of their constitution—The ephori—Senate of old men—Kings—Nobles—Plebeians.

COLONIES OF LACEDAEMON . . 287

Tarentum—Byzantium—Cyrene—Hiraclea—Manner of forming colonies—Errors of the ancients respecting colonies—Different kinds of colonies among the greeks—Antipathy between the Dorians and Ionians.

POLITICAL DISSOLUTION OF LACEDAEMON 292

Loss of the empire of the sea—Loss of Messenia—Loss of the battle of Mantinæa—Loss of the battle of Sellasia—Death of Cleomenes—Lacedæmonian monarchy set up at auction—Lycurgus—Machanidas Nabis—Cruelties of this tyrant—Exterminates the Spartans—His manner of re-peopling Lacedæmon—Maritime places of Laconia detached from the Spartan yoke—Origin of the free Laconians.

HISTORY AND MANNERS OF THE MAINOTS 298

Their origin—Chief place in the northern coast—Disposition of these people for theft and pillage—Cacovougnis or Mainots of the South—Their manners—Castle of Maina—Arrival of Nicephorus—Observations on this adventurer—Protogerontes, or princes of the Mainots—Nations independent and wandering in Asia—Mardicores—Anthropophagi—Character of the Mainots—Flight of the Mainots of the north—Their arrival in Corsica—State of the coast of Maina after that emigration—Hereditary captainries—Last exploit of the Cacovougnis.

CONCLUSION . . . 306

ERRATA in VOL. II.

Page 101 line 12 for *soli*, read *solidity*.
129 — 8 for *embarking* read *embarked*.
171 — 2 after *white*, add *cloud*.
303 — 27 for *ever gives*, read *never gives*.
307 — 17 for *incapable*, read *capable*.

SECT. VI.

STATE OF CIVILIZATION AMONG THE ATHENIANS.

I. MODE OF FORMING TRIBUNALS.

SOME nations, like the Poles and Sclavonians in general, seem to have an innate propensity for anarchy; but the Athenians, on the contrary, were no less naturally inclined towards order and legislation.

The town of Athens was the focus of political knowledge, which enlightened the rest of the world; and new erected states sent thither to obtain laws, as our modern ship-builders look for timber in Sweden.

Philosophy had attained such perfection there, and the different teachers knew so well how to conduct their pupils, that, on leaving the schools, they were already capable of being legislators.—Isocrates informs us, that many, who were regarded at Athens as mere apprentices, would have passed in all other countries for great masters.

 Never

Never did any nation exhibit such numbers of tribunals, judges, and magistrates, but particularly of orators. Demosthenes asserts, that before his time they amounted to ten thousand; and afterwards they were still more numerous.

To make laws, plead causes, judge suits, and exercise the different functions of magistracy, were four things which composed almost the instinct of the Athenians.

All tribunals, entrusted with the power of condemning a citizen to death, exile, or infamy, consisted invariably of many persons. When Demosthenes was accused of being corrupted by the money of Harpalus, no less than fifteen hundred judges were assembled to decide on the matter of fact, and determine the nature of his punishment. *

The criminal tribunals of Europe have this great defect, that they are composed of very few members, so that life, honor and fortune depend on a small number of opinions, and even those are often unenlightened. The only reason assigned for such injustice is the expence unavoidably incurred by paying a multitude of judges, particularly for criminal matters, which are never very lucrative; and this custom, worthy of cannibals, has been perpetuated from the basest motives of avarice.

* Pleading of Dinarchus *against Demosthenes.*

According

According to the exactest theory and the deepest combinations, all criminal tribunals ought to consist of one hundred and sixty members, divided into two classes: the accused should possess the right of appealing from one to the other; and even of excluding twenty persons from the whole number, who may be suspected of being prejudiced against him.

No maxim can be more absurd than that which admits of no appeal for criminals. The person who does not succeed in ascertaining his claim to a gutter before one tribunal, can have recourse to another; but that privilege is denied to him, who has been condemned unjustly to the flames by the sentence of nine sheriffs. Now if imbecility itself was to dictate laws, they could not be more revolting; because the right to a gutter is thus allowed to be more important than the life and honor of a man devoted to torments.

As the number of the Areopagus at Athens was undetermined, it happened frequently to be unequal, and then the law required that one voice should be ſuspended in the tribunal. This institution was peculiar to the Athenians, and common sense would have taught it to other nations, had not the greater part, guided by erroneous principles, persisted in having a casting voice in all their criminal courts. With them there is no medium between extremes, while at Athens the accused was absolved, whenever the suffrages of the

judges were equally divided. This happened, it is said, in the case of Orestes; and ever afterwards the Areopagus, when sitting in judgement, was composed of equal numbers. *

All country judicatories, now so common in Europe through the influence of feudal laws, and barbarous manners, were wisely abolished by the Athenians. For in the Salic, as well as the Saxon code, we find nothing but multiplied proofs, that those, who compiled such monuments of human extravagance, had no idea whatever of criminal jurisprudence.

Theseus is generally supposed to have suppressed all the petty courts in the different cantons of Attica by an act of his own authority. But this opinion, although adopted by Thucydides, is not probable; for when Theseus was banished for ever from Athens, the ancient custom would in that case have been revived, and it was not even proposed afterwards.

The whole history of Athens proves, that this reform, instead of being produced by violence, was the effect of unanimous consent. Even the smallest villages may be supposed to have been happy at being delivered from inconveniencies, so vexatious and irksome in their nature, that many

* Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, and in the *Electra*
When the suffrages of the Areopagites were divided, the least rigorous sentiment prevailed, and no intermediate opinions were admitted,

com-

communities groan still under their supposed privileges.

General maxim: in a well-governed country all criminal courts belonging to lords of manors must be abolished; because they are neither properly constituted, nor composed of enlightened men.—Those who defend such gothic institutions become in fact the advocates of anarchy, and conspirators against public felicity.

All tribunals, by whatever name they may be defined, were concentered within the walls of Athens. That the peasants might not be interrupted in their labour by repairing to the capital for every trifling action, it was thought expedient to form a tribunal very different from any thing that ſubsists among the nations of Europe. It was composed of itinerant judges, who proceeded incessantly through the cottages and hamlets of Attica, for the purpose of terminating all subjects of contest, where the object did not surpass the value of ten drachm. *

To this laudable institution the Athenians added another, still more demonstrative of the superiority of their genius in matters of jurisprudence. No cause could be judged by any tribunal before it had been submitted to arbitration. †

When it was impossible to reconcile the different opinions and interests by this procedure, the affair was brought before the six thouſand judges. ‡

* Pollux, *Onomaſt.* Lib. VIII. † *Collection of Attic Laws.* ‡ Ariſtophanes, in the *Comedy of the Waſps.*

They were not all indeed employed in judging at the same time, but from them the Heliastes were drawn by lot, and their number depended on the nature of the subject to be decided. In ordinary cases they amounted to five hundred, and formed consequently an unequal tribunal, proceeding in civil causes on the same plan that the Areopagtes had adopted with respect to crimes.

When discussions of greater consequence were brought forward, they sometimes occupied a thousand, or even fifteen hundred Judges; as we have observed in the case of Demosthenes. No court surpassed that number, unless in cases of high treason, or *Lese-majesty*, and the majesty of the Athenians was their liberty. ‡

Humanity, and the first notions of reason, can not be more violated than by commiting the power of life and death to a small number of obscure men, who for the most part have purchased their places. Without possessing the smallest knowledge of jurisprudence, three such Judges are often sufficient to destroy a citizen, and plunge his descendants into all the horrors of indigence and infamy. Judgements of this kind are null from their very nature, but unfortunately not so in their effects; because if founded on the dictates of truth, or the decrees of the Eternal, they could not be executed more rigorously. Yet these three men

‡ Blanchart, *Dissertation sur les Heliastes* in the memoirs of the Academy of Inscriptions.

might easily be blinded by a fallacious exposition of facts, were they not still more liable to corruption.

In all cases the safety of the accused increases in proportion to the number of his Judges, provided they possess capacities adequate to their station, and have not obtained their appointments by purchase. Money alone is not considered a sufficient qualification for admitting any person to the practice of surgery, or the occupations of a pilot; and to admit its influence in matters of such importance as criminal judgements, is the greatest degree of extravagance.

When the Athenians accused their Generals of neglect, or their Admirals of misconduct, not less than six thousand citizens were required to pronounce a legal sentence. It was the same with Ostracism, an institution so absolutely necessary in all true Democracies, that the want of it was fatal to the Republic of Rome. When Sylla and Cæsar were made Dictators, they could not be punished; but at Athens they would have been banished from the state ten days before the time of their promotion to that dignity.

An Athenian, who had contrived to make himself hated or feared by six thousand of his fellow-citizens, deserved richly to be removed for the space of ten years from their society. This simple method of preventing political convulsions was not accompanied with the smallest injustice: for the effects of those expelled by Ostracism were never confiscated

confiscated, and writers, who are ſo ignorant as to suppose any thing of that nature, do not deserve to be refuted.*

II. CONCERNING SOLON.

Never did the influence of one man tend more to the advantage of any country than that of Solon in the civilization of Athens.

Nature had not endowed him with a sublime genius; but he possessed so much good sense, understanding, and rectitude of heart, that something almost divine seemed impressed on his character.

The inhabitants of Salamis, where he was born, resembled in every thing the other islanders of the Archipelago; they were equally laborious, and sensible to the charms of love and of poesy.—Solon commenced by sacrificing on the altars of both Divinities; and his verses breathed ſo much voluptuousneſs, that Apuleius contents himself with citing only one of them, in excuse for his own indiscretions. †

At a more advanced age, he applied himself, like the Salaminians in general, to commerce and navigation, without, however, acquiring any considerable fortune. Afterwards, he entered into the

* Exile was frequently accompanied with confiscation of property, but Oſtraciſm never. Suidas at the word ΟΣΤΡΑΚΙΣΜΟΣ, and Meursius, *Lect. Atticar.* lib, 5.

† Apuleius in his *Apology*.

public

public departments; filled some places in the magistracy, and frequented the bar of Athens as an Orator. But his passion for poetry was predominant, and he published, about this time, those moral elegies, which correspond ſo well with his reputation for wisdom.

When created legiſlator, he conceived at first the idea of writing his laws in verse; but the difficulty of introducing terms of jurisprudence made him recourse to proſe, and there he discovers leſs force of expression than in his moral poetry. * Yet his language was still more intelligible than that of Draco, who wrote ſo very obscurely, that some fragments of his legislation now extant, require the utmost attention before they can be rightly understood. Draco resembled those ignorant phyſicians, who begin with an incomprehensible jargon, and end by bleeding their patients to death. But the Athenians revolted against such effusion of blood, and rejected that political atrocity, which, confounding crimes with faults and errors, makes ſo many nations regret savage life in the midst of civilization.

Solon avoided carefully all those prologues, so much esteemed by Plato. He expressed himself in very few words, and his laws speaking for themselves, required no preliminary discourses; while matters perfectly ideal, like those introduced by Plato, were not intelligible without explanations.

* Meursius *Hiſtory of Solon.*

The

The ancient Legislators of Greece, appear to have been ignorant of every thing relative to agriculture, commerce, and manufactures. They either lived previous to the existence of any principles on which ſuch objects are founded, or wanted perhaps, sufficient penetration to develope them. With a people ſo industrious as the Athenians, the attention of Solon could be directed to all branches of economy; he spoke to every class and profession; bankers, merchants, artists, cultivators, to the very shepherds of Diacri, and the proprietors of bees on mount Hymettus. Such was his capacity, that he seized every detail, and neglected nothing that could augment national wealth, or public felicity. Sensible to human weaknesses from his infancy, he knew how to be indulgent, and gratified the passions of mankind in every thing that did not interfere with the intereſts of society. Courtesans were tolerated at Athens, in order to correct a great evil by one of an inferior nature, Punishments were softened, and recompences augmented; but the sublimity of this legislation appeared most in the universal attachment which it produced for the laws: they were respected as much as those of Draco had been hated.

If the greatness of Solon was leſs conspicuous in political, than civil affairs, it was because the situation of Athens, convulsed by three factions, did not allow him sufficient liberty in reforming the body of the State. The rich, who were called

Eupores,

Eupores, and the Eupatrides, or nobles, contrived innumerable obstacles to all his undertakings; and being born the enemies of Republican equality, they forced him, in opposition to the wishes of his heart, to restrain too much the legitimate authority of the people. But in more tranquil and happy days this was corrected, as well as many other faults, unavoidable in a Democracy, framed amidst civil war and confusion.

The Paralian, Diacrian, and Pedian parties, were for some time too much exasperated to deliver up their arms, but they could no longer oppose this, when Cleanthes had created ten new tribes, who did not, like the others, follow any local order. This augmentation changed altogether the plan of Solon's Republic; without however affecting in the least his civil laws, which, founded on the strictest equity, deserved to exist for ever; and they did triumph for many ages over every revolution, and all popular commotions. Pisistratus, although a tyrant, caused them to be observed; and exacted nothing more from the Athenians than the tenth part of the annual revenues of their lands. On submitting to pay this royal tythe, he allowed them to live quietly; and the laws of Solon continued to be the basis of the Athenian and Roman rights, as well as of our own.

III. GENIUS

III. GENIUS OF THE ATHENIAN ORATORS.

As Athenian liberty increased, it became more vulnerable in a thousand different ways; and innumerable lawsuits took place there, which are unknown to nations under the subjection of Princes or Kings. The expences attending such pleadings, as well as the emoluments of the Judges, were ſo trifling, that no temptation existed, as in our days, for protracting decisions. The whole was often the affair of an inſtant; because the parties were allowed to discuss their pretensions before tribunals, without being forced to employ advocates.

The Athenians, ſays Cicero, are favored by nature with ſuch powers of speech, that the moſt ignorant amongst them have more unaffected eloquence than all the learned Greeks of Asia.*

When any matters of civil law required more than merely the art of speaking, it became necessary to employ orators, who divided all business of that kind amongst them, as the only means of conducting ſo many judiciary actions.

Antiphon never pleaded unless the matter came under the cognizance of the Areopagus: Isæus confined himself to the dry study of testamentary clauses; and no person at Athens understood the contentious part of commerce better than De-

* Cicero *de Oratore*. III.

moshenes.

mosthenes. This proceeded from his having lived so much at the port of Piræus, where, according to Æſchines and Dicearchus, he was constantly forming connections with bankers, masters of veſſels, and merchants, who furnished him with every kind of information concerning maritime usury, nautical contracts, and all thoſe extraordinary subtleties, practised by the Greeks in their commerce.

Andocides and Æſchines undertook no causes purely civil; but were constantly employed in making their own apologies, or attacking the characters of others. By a necessary effect of political liberty, citizens had the power of accusing each other; but when four hundred and one Judges declared the action groundless, the calumniator was condemned to a severe fine. Andocides possessed, beyond comparison, more genius than probity: and knew, perfectly well, every detail in the labyrinth of attic jurisprudence. Yet diffuse and dry as an orator, he never gathered any flowers on his passage; while Æschines excelled in a knowledge of the law, as well as the art of eloquence and of irony. Cicero acknowledges that he profited more from the works of this orator, than all the writings of Demosthenes.

Lycurgus, ſon of Lycophron, was the most severe and formidable of the Athenian orators: he made open war against the guilty, and always attacked the accused with ſuch vehemence, that they

they seldom eſcaped condemnation. His ſucceſs, however, would have been more complete, had he not adopted the vicious method of mixing poetry with eloquence. During the recital of long passages from Homer, Tyrtœus, Euripides, or ſome other famous versifiers, the minds of his auditors had time to become tranquil; and in regaining the thread of his discourse, he was forced to uſe more repetitions than any man who ever spoke in public. *

Lyſias invented a new species of eloquence, by preserving a medium between sublime composition, and the sterile manner of Antiphon, Iſæus, and Andocides; born and educated at Piræus, the reputed sanctuary of Athenian urbanity, he acquired a style so soft and pure, that it has since been proposed as a model. † Lyſias possessed no ſmall ſhare of addreſs, and treated every subject with facility: we may therefore ſuppose that the winds would not have abandoned him, had he ventured on the open ſea; but he was chained to the ſhore by his timidity.

All these orators overcharged their pleadings with offensive personalities, which were considered as essential to popular liberty. This however was rather an ancient prejudice of the Athenian bar, than a political truth exactly demonstrated.

* *Accusation of Lycurgus againſt Leochares.*

† Dionysius of Halicarnassus *life of Lysias*; and Taylor in the *Prolegomena on that Orator.*

The

The Judges, who were exposed every day to hear such torrents of invectives, endeavoured in vain to prevent them by enforcing the law of the clepsydra. By it the pleaders were restricted to a fixed time, regulated by water-clocks, for delivering their harangues.

Some people have erroneously believed, that the wings of eloquence were plucked, and its thunders extinguished by this inſtitution. Æschines and Demosthenes were always under its influence, and yet they had the art of taking advantage of the few remaining instants, to exercise their talents for abuse, until the laſt drop of water was gone.

Such oratorial conflicts only took place, in particular cases, when no medium was left between vanquishing, or suffering personal disgrace; for the same fire and vehemence did not appear, when the object in conteſt was relative to an inheritance, a nautical contract, or the infidelity of a guardian. Demosthenes deigned not to display any ornaments of rhetoric in common matters; and it was even said, that he never exerted all the power of his eloquence, except on three different occasions; * which proved that he knew how to

* The philosopher Panætius pretends that only three of the harangues of Demosthenes can be called eloquent; one *for the crown*, another *against Aristocrates*, and that *against Leptines*, which Dionisius of Halicarnassus considers as his maſter piece; but the moſt general opinion is in favour of the oration *for the crown*.

adapt

adapt his style to the subject. Amongst his pleadings we find one in favor of a peasant of Attica, who disputed with one of his neighbours, the right to a gutter: the whole value of this property did not exceed thirty shillings; and it would have been truly ridiculous to employ there, any of the springs of sublime oratory.

The Greeks, and principally the Athenians conceived, that the great art of speaking or writing well, consisted in finding language suitable to the matter; where words should be proportioned to things, and phrases to ideas. Without such conformity, the orator steers amidst shoals, and becomes either a declamer, a panegyrist, or a poet in prose. Plato wandered in this manner among dithyrambic periods, without ever being able to distinguish the parts of the edifice where simplicity should prevail, from those which required decorations.

Some subjects, says Cicero, should never be embellished by any ornaments of style; and those who attempt such follies, are inferior in judgement to children. * But whole tribes of writers exist at the present day, who are infants in that respect; and this is the reason why so many complaints are heard on the decline of good taste, as in the times of Seneca and Lucan.

* *Istius modi autem m res dicere ornate velle, puerile est. De Fin III.*

IV. SOURCES OF DISCORD AND LITIGATION AMONG THE GREEKS.

Few contests arofe with the Athenians from any uncertainty in the limits of their estates. They watched over them with an exactness unknown to other nations; and Theophrastus, in his *Characters*, describes an Athenian, who went every day to examine the boundaries of his field.

The laws relative to mortgages, in that part of Greece, were very different from ours. When the cultivators took up money on their lands, the lenders were enjoined to place inscriptions in each field, denoting the sums for which they were engaged. *

The species of infamy attached to so many visible and manifeft figns of incumbered property, repreffed in fome measure the profufion of the owners. They became economical from pride, because it was impoffible for them to ruin themselves fecretly, as we find practised so easily at present. This method, adopted by the Athenians, had besides the advantage of preventing certain frauds, not easily fuppressed in the moft civilized countries of Europe.

* Thefe fignals bore in Greek the generical term of OPIO and they were not only placed on lands, but on houses mortgaged, or otherwise indebted. Frequent mention is made of this in the pleadings of Isæus, and in that of Demosthenes againft Phenippus.

Xenophon informs us, that, notwithſtanding the great number of judges and tribunals at Athens, their buſineſs could not be terminated in the year, * because, numerous holidays interrupted the courts of justice. On the other hand, none of the tributary towns and islands could obtain a final judgement, unless before some court at Athens.— The inhabitants of Samos, Imbros, Lemnos, Delos, Paros, and many other trading places, afforded numberless suits for commerce, which was always an inexhaustible source of litigation among the Greeks.

The merchants of Phaselis, a town on the coast of Asia, were altogether remarkable for their turbulence and injustice. No sooner did they arrive at Piræus, than actions were commenced either against masters of vessels or bankers; and of all barbarous or civilized nations, who visited the port of Athens, none, ſays Demosthenes, were ſo litigious as the Phaselites. †

Yet the perversity of their disposition became afterwards still more conspicuous; for they served as admirals and commanders in the famous fleet of corsairs destroyed by Pompey, but secretly encouraged by Mithridates, who first introduced the scandalous practice of supplying pirates with arms. This species of insidious policy has since rendered the maritime powers of Europe tributary

* Treatise on the *Republic of Athens*,
† Demosthenes, *against Lacrites*.

to

to the Dey of Algiers, who, like Agamemnon, may justly be styled King of Kings. All nations are forced to purchase the favor of this robber, who never deigns to pay any court to others; and particularly not to the knights of Malta, the useless spectators of so many humiliations.

Great Britain has principally encouraged these depredations of the Barbary states, to prevent the Spaniards, Venetians, Dutch, and French, from enriching themselves on the Mediterranean; in the same manner that Mithridates intended to destroy the commerce of the Romans.

The Asiatics of the coaſt of Cilicia and Lycia, in the vicinity of Phaselis, were equally vicious; and we may suppose what troubles must have been excited by these people in all the ports they frequented. It is therefore not extraordinary, when so many faults were to be corrected, and violences redressed, that the tribunals of Athens could not terminate their business in the lapse of a lunary month, the period prescribed for commercial decisions. *

Another cause of litigation among the Athenians was peculiar to their silver mines. The undertakers of their works carried on subterranean wars, and after pillaging each other, they preferred complaints in a language of their art, totally incomprehensible to the Judges. So many techni-

* Demosthenes, *concerning the island of Halonneius.*

cal terms, relative to Metallurgy, obliged the Athenians to form what was called the *Metallic Court.* * There, all causes of that nature were tried by men versed in the minutiæ of the profession, who published a code expressly for the purpose.

Two great misdemeanors prevailed among these people; the one consisted in carrying off fraudulently the props of wood, called *mesocrines*, from the subterraneous galleries; and the other in plundering the mineral collected by their neighbours, after having pierced the circumjacent partition, and suffocated the miners with smoke, or the effluvia of sulphur. It may therefore be boldly asserted, that no species of crime or villainy was unknown to the Greeks; but monsters, capable of the enormities we have mentioned, were transferred from the metallic before some superior Court, to receive capital punishments.

To accusations so tragical and atrocious succeeded others of a less serious nature, founded on account of some abusive or injurious expressions. Although such offences were constantly punished by fines, yet they could not restrain the fury of the Athenians for inventing and applying satirical epithets. Some citizens had more than one; Pericles was *cynocephalus*, Cherephon the *bat*, Lycur-

* Libanius or the person who composed the summaries of Demosthenes, calls this tribunal ΜΕΤΑΛΛΙΚΟΝ ΔΙΚΑΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ, and the laws relative to it were termed ΜΕΤΑΛΛΙΚΟΙ ΝΟΜΟΙ.

gus

gus the *stork*; and Demosthenes, after being called *Batulus* in his youth, received at a more advanced age the title of *Therion*, or the beaſt by excellence. Dames of the first distinction, as well as courtesans, received the same treatment; and the mother of Æschines, who had in reality the charming name of Leucothea, was only known to the people by that of *Empusa*, or the sorceress. Actions without number were the consequence of such nick-names; but, when humorously invented, the Judges could uot prevent their success. No other resource then remained than that of appealing to the court of good ſayings, eſtabliſhed at Diomea, and denouncing the aggressor as a composer of wicked jests.

V. CAUSES OF THE GRANDEUR AND DECLINE GF THE AREOPAGUS.

In beginning these investigations, it must be observed, that the Areopagus, when originally constituted, was nothing more than a simple criminal tribunal, intended particularly to judge poisoners, murderers, and incendiaries, without possessing the smallest influence on the civil government of the Republic.

Solon, guided by motives which cannot now be easily explained, invested the Areopagus with the powers of a directing Senate, *for the general inspection of the State, and preservation of the laws.* *

* The law of Solon relative to the Areopagus, was conveyed in these terms; ΤΗΝ ῾ΕΝ Α᾽ΡΕΙΩ ΠΑΓΩ ΒΟΥΛΗΝ ΕΙΝΑΙ ᾽ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΝ ΠΑΝΓΩΝ, ΚΑΙ ΦΥΛΑΚΑ ΤΩΝ ΝΟΜΩΝ. Plutarch's *Life of Solon.*

Such

Such were the expressions of this legislator: and every person must perceive, that, from being so very vague, they could not fail to produce unlimited pretensions. In consequence of this the Areopagites constituted themselves the judges of morals; they assumed the inspection of buildings and of forests, besides many other offices totally incompatible with a criminal Court.

When Pericles proposed constructing magnificent edifices, in order to procure subsistence for workmen, and opportunities for those who wished to cultivate the arts, he perceived that not one column or chapiter of marble could be brought to Athens, without encountering continual obstacles from this tribunal. Pericles therefore advised the people to diminish the unreasonable powers of the Areopagites, who were known to follow aristocratical maxims.

This reform some politicians have thought unconstitutional and injurious to the State: but they did not know, or had never reflected, that the negligence of that body of men in certain points was highly criminal.

Instead of acquitting themselves of a respectable duty, by preserving the legislation of Solon in purity, they allowed it to be falsified so immediately under their eyes, that they may justly be regarded as accomplices.

These laws, originally engraved on wood, threatened to perish under the hand of time; and

to

to prevent so great a misfortune, one Nicomachus, a Secretary of the Republic, was directed to transcribe them faithfully into the public registers.— This man, disdaining the trade of a copyist, presumed to attempt legislation, by altering the ancient laws, and adding others of his own. So many new holidays, as well as sacrifices were introduced in this manner, that the yearly expence of public worship was increased to six attic talents, or eleven hundred pounds more than had been stipulated by Solon. *

From loss of time to the citizens, and the interruption of courts of justice, the State really sustained two irreparable injuries from these inovations.

As Nicomachus was the son of a slave, and consequently a person of no consideration in the Republic, he would not have dared to charge himself with such an open forgery, unless secretly supported by the Priests. It was they who reaped the greatest advantages from additional feasts, sacrifices, and other taxes of that nature, imposed on the credulity of the people.

Owing to this infidelity, we have now only such imperfect texts of the law of Solon, as betray evidently their spurious origin. To express new things, recourse has been necessarily had to words of a modern date; and Galen assures us, that

* Lysias in the pleading against *the scribe Nicomachus.*

Gymnasiarch was not invented, until long after the time of Solon. †

Notwithſtanding the continual tendancy of the Areopagites to acquire authority in every department of the State, they could never obtain the direction of religious matters, nor any influence in theological conteſts. Thoſe, who venture to maintain the contrary, are ignorant of what they pretend to know, as will clearly appear to every person on perusing the article relative to accusations of impiety, and the death of Socrates.

Those, who have written concerning the Areopagus, were in general very ill informed, as appears by their pretending that judgements were given there only by night. This was certainly untrue: for at Athens, as well as Rome, no sentence could be passed while the sun was under the horizon.

It is also false, that orators, in the presence of the Areopagites, were restrained from employing exordiums, perorations, and all the great springs of an eloquence generally exerted to excite either terror or pity. Antiphon, pleading before their tribunal concerning the murder of Herod, introduced not only an exordium, but likewise the longeſt peroration ever known. After having exhausted the secrets of his art, he beseeches the Areopagites not to be deceived by the magic of

† Treatise ΠΟΤΕΡΟΝ ἸΑΤΡΙΚΗΣ Ἡ ΓΥΜΝΑΣΤΙΚΗΣ ἘΣΤΙ ΤΟ ΥΓΙΕΙΝΟΝ.

an illusory rhetoric, as sometimes happened, when the greatest criminals were suffered to escape the severity of the law from the fascination of language. *

Two distinct crimes could not indeed be confounded before this tribunal; and when any man had been arraigned for homicide, it was illegal to accuse him at the same time of theft, or sacrilege. † This regulation appears very natural, when we consider, that the Areopagus had not the power of judging the two last of these crimes, which appertained exclusively to another court.

Every thing, that has been related concerning the dark and mysterious proceedings of the Areopagus, originated entirely from the impossibility of knowing the suffrages of the judges. They were always given in secret, more from motives of personal security, than to favor the accused; for nothing relative to criminal judgements should be concealed, or treated in the least as a mystery. Yet the emperor Julian, from being educated at Athens, was so infatuated with the usages adopted there, that, even in his satire against the Cæsars, he represents the Gods passing sentence on Constantine by secret suffrages, as if such an infamous murderer ought not to have been condemned publicly.

* Antiphon in his pleading relative to the *murder of Herod.*

† In the same pleading.

The

The Areopagites were obliged in all cases to hear what was called a Tetralogy, or four pleadings; two of which were for the prosecution, and as many in favor of the accused. It is only necessary to read the Tetralogies of Antiphon, to be convinced that they contained all the subtleties of which the human mind is susceptible; for no logician or sophist whatever could have invented more arguments than are produced in these pleadings. *

We have already observed that the number of persons who composed the Areopagus, varied from circumstances. An annual addition of nine new members always took place, because those who had been Archons were entitled to sit there, after their year of magistracy was expired; yet the assembly consisted in general of between three and four hundred persons. †

According to the institutes of Solon, this court should have been composed alone of nobles, or such as were of the Equestrian order; but when a real Democracy was establifhed, the Plebeians likewise enjoyed the same privilege, whenever they had been Archons.

From all this it is evident, that the deputies, who were sent from Rome to Athens to study the

* Tetralogy relative to the death of a young man who was killed accidently in a Gymnasium of Athens.

† Hauptman, de Foro Attico.

politics and legislation of the Athenians, had particular interests in view, when they represented the Areopagus as a model for the Roman Senate; and to this finesse of the Patricians the people were long victims. By imitating the Athenian Senate, instead of adopting the institution of the Areopagites, many evils would have been avoided; because, the members of the former were elected annually, while the latter remained in office during life, as the Senators of Rome continued to do for many years.

VI. ACCUSATION OF IMPIETY AT ATHENS.

The only tribunal where citizens could be arraigned for impiety, was that of an Archon, who presided as King of Sacrifices, and sovereign Pontiff of the Republic. *

Whenever any accusation was lodged before this magistrate, he was obliged to assemble by lot a great number of judges, from among the six thousand, who were entitled to such privileges. †

Plato informs us in the clearest manner, that Socrates was condemned by this Court; and it is astonishing to find so many books ascribing that act to the Areopagus, or the tribunal of the Heliasts.

* Demosthenes, *against Lacrites.*

† Lysias in the *accusation of impiety against Andocides.*

The

The mysteries of Ceres, to be explained hereafter, produced the first accusations of impiety; and with these in time were confounded all vague objects, such as inexplicable words, or events that could not be comprehended.

It is very probable, that the person, who accused the courtisan Phryne, had received a refusal during the night for which he sought to avenge himself in the morning.

The women of that class were in fact reduced to a sad alternative: for whether they demanded an extravagant price for their favors, or denied them altogether, it was often sufficient provocation for Libertines to have them tried for impiety before the King of Sacrifices. As this tribunal allowed itself to be swayed, in general, by very bad arguments, the courtesans had soon reason to repent their having discovered so much disdain or avarice.

It was the Orator Hyperides, who undertook the defence of Phryne; but by the greatest fatality this pleading, so highly entertaining, has been lost, while so many others, void of any great degree of merit, are still preserved. What spectacle could be more interesting than to see the most beautiful woman in Greece, who had served as a model for the Venus of Gnidus, humbled at the feet of a priest, exposed to rivals jealous of her

her glory, surrounded by debauchees, advocates and calumniators: when Hyperides threw aside her veil to disarm the most inveterate of her enemies! From so many rare incidents, an able artist might compose a group even superior to that of Ætion, where he represented the marriage of Alexander with Roxana.

When the Hermæ or, statues of Minerva, were mutilated at Athens, the Athenians exclaimed, that so great profanation had never been perpetrated by man, and they began to apprehend some approaching conspiracy, not only ruinous to the Republic, but fatal to all the states of Greece.— Amidst this general consternation, the orator Andocides, who was an accomplice in that memorable exploit, became public informer: he insisted that the whole affair proceeded, in reality, from nothing more than the folly of some young Athenians, to whom a certain Euphelites had suggested this project, after having emptied several urns of the rich wines of Chios and Lesbos. * The minds of those, who had discovered the greatest alarm, were quieted by this declaration, and Attica again enjoyed its former gaiety.

Thucydides ſeems to suspect, without reason, the sincerity of Andocides on this occasion; for among the sulphurous wines of Greece, some were so very pernicious, that those who drank of them to excess became exasperated against statues,

* Andocides *on Mysteries*, and the mutilation of the Hermæ.

in

in the same manner that certain animals grow furious at the sight of red colours. Nothing therefore would have been more unjuſt than to punish such men with fire and sword, as has since been practiſed by the fanatical and barbarous inhabitants of Abbeville.

In the isle of Naxos, which was particularly consecrated to Bacchus, and entirely covered with vine-yards, some drunken Greeks, having injured several bad statues of the tutelar Divinity, were condemned to replace them with others of a superior quality.

The magistrates of Naxos seem, from this conduct, to have understood matters of policy; but they would have discovered more wisdom, by contriving to have all objects of public worship confined to the temples. Great abuses in religion always produce what is called profanation; and this, as well as sacrilege, might be effaced from the criminal codes of all nations, if, instead of endeavouring to corrupt the deity by heaping up riches in his temples, they offered the incense of gratitude and virtue.

Andocides did not pass a single day at Athens without either prosecuting his enemies, or having to defend himself againſt their attacks; and he avowed, that nature must have engendered him in wrath, to be continually tormented by the caprices of fortune, and the serpents of discord.

Scarcely

Scarcely had the storm, occasioned by the mutilation of the Hermæ, blown over, before he was again accused of impiety; and the motives for this attack could never have been imagined without the aid of his own words. Some financiers of Athens, says he, proposed to farm the duties on the importation of foreign wares for thirty talents, and I having offered thirty-six to the Republic, my opponents accused me before the king of sacrifices, that they might enrich themselves at the expence of the state. *

Religion in all such cases was in reality nothing more than a pretext for gratifying personal animosities, favoring particular interests, or promoting the political views of the Noble and Plebeian factions.

Yet Plato has dared to propose such institutions for his Republic; where, says he, no incredulity should be permitted; but all must unite in public adoration of the planets, and even the smallest supposition that these bright orbs are not Divinities, ought to be considered and punished as blasphemy. †

Never did Plato appear so inconsistent as when expressing himself in this manner, like an inquisitor, and producing such silly arguments as might

* Andocides on Mysteries.

† On the Republic lib. X. This assertion of Plato, on the subject of planets, contains the elements of all the chimeras of the Platonists who succeeded him.

have

have been expected only from ignorant idolaters in the Pagodas of Indostan.

So many deviations prove clearly that the judgment of the Greeks was inferior to their genius; and an unfortunate enthusiasm has tarnished the works of their best authors. Even the antient critics themselves have acknowledged, that the worst productions of Plato and Xenophon were their apologies for Socrates; and besides, the argument on which they depended most, was a pretended Oracle of Delphos, since universally rejected as spurious.* But, at all events, the impostors of Apollo were unworthy of being cited by sages, particularly in the cause of philosophy.

The innocence of Socrates did not require the aid of revelation to render it conspicuous; and his sublime virtues were better calculated to establish his reputation, than all the miracles of mount Parnassus.

He was a victim, as we have already observed, to the animosity of two implacable factions, who equally concurred in abusing all the rights of accusation for impiety. Plato must have been infatuated, not to perceive the necessity of avoiding all such institutions, even in his political Romance; for the rule should be fundamental in all well regulated states, not to interfere with metaphysical opinions. Whatever does not depend on the

* Van Dale, *de Oraculis.*

senses,

senses can properly be submitted to the cognizance of tribunals; and whenever legislators attempt to assume any power over the conscience, they only expose their laws to violation.

VII. ON HEMLOCK, AND THE COMMUTATION OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENTS INTO PECUNIARY FINES.

Plutarch, in his life of Phocion, affirms that the convicts at Athens were obliged to pay twelve drachmæ for a bowl of hemlock. This plant was peculiar to the shady valleys of Diacri, and is still so plentiful there, that its emanations, carried by the wind, are said to occasion fevers among the inhabitants at a great distance. Notwithstanding the astonishing activity of this poison, the death it occasioned was neither accompanied with much pain, nor any symptoms of convulsions, owing most probably to a portion of opium added to the composition by an Arcadian, concerning whom Theophrastus has given some account, in his history of plants.

As the Athenians loved jesting above all things, we find Theramenes and others hazarding good sayings, even while emptying the fatal cup. Some, says Plato, prepare magnificent repasts in prison; after which they pass the few remaining instants of life in the arms of mistresses, and then swallow the last of medicines with as much composure, as if they drank of the stream of oblivion.*

* Plato, in the *Phædon.*

These men were zealous sectators of Anacreon, who preached Epicurism among the Greeks, near two hundred years before the birth of the reputed founder of that philosophy; and Epicurus, so far from giving any new impulse to the system already adopted, was forced to exert all his wisdom to prevent its excesses. Enjoyment, says he, does not consist in sleeping with Lais or Phryne; and it can only be found in a life free from civil as well as criminal contestations. This maxim was so strongly impressed on the hearts of his disciples, that they preferred no complaints to the King of Sacrifices, neither was any Epicurean ever accused of impiety. So little did these men frequent tribunals, that both judges and orators must have perished from hunger, had all others been equally desirous of tranquility.

In all criminal courts of Athens, the suffrages were twice collected: the first time decided on the guilt or innocence of the accused, and the second determined the nature of the punishment, provided it had not been already indicated by the law. Previous, however, to the latter of these procedures, the criminals were interrogated by the judges concerning the sums they had to offer, for their redemption from the pains of death. * The same question was likewise proposed to Socrates; but the event has too fatally demonstrated, that the parties did not agree on the articles of capitulation.

* *Erat Athenis reo damnato, si fraus capitalis non esset, quasi pœnæ æstimatio. Et sententia cum judicibus daretur, interrogabatur reus, quam quasi æstimationem commeruisse se maxime confiteretur.* CICERO, *de Oratore, lib. I.*

Cicero

Cicero says that this usage was invariable at Athens, except in cases of poisoning or murder: and then all the gold of Pactolus could not disarm the severity of the law, or prevent the punishment of death. But the execution of any sentence was neither accompanied with torments, nor any barbarous ceremonies; for every thing of that nature was expressly prohibited in a law framed by Solon, and considered as the basis of criminal jurisprudence among the citizens of Athens. *

No person could there be condemned on any account to suffer torture; because every infliction of pain, previous to conviction, is unjust in its principles; and the effects of such procedures are so uncertain, says Aristotle, that they produce falsehood more frequently than truth. †

Solon was right in abolishing every appearance of barbarity towards criminals; for cruel examples serve only to render mankind more atrocious. Morals, from the same cause, are suddenly corrupted in towns ravaged by the plague; where an excess of calamity effaces all notions of equity or injustice, and the dying pilfer from each other.

An Athenian, by suffering death from the law, did not throw the smallest shadow of infamy on his family, unless a clause to that effect had been notified in his sentence. But this severity, truly fatal, was reserved for crimes of high treason, and as

* *Recueil des lois Attiques. Lib. VII.*
† *Rhetoric,* lib. I.

 such

such, were considered all attempts to change the popular form of government.

Antiphon was in this predicament when condemned by a solemn decree, declaring positively that *his descendants, whether legitimate or bastards, should be considered as infamous.* *

It was a custom of great antiquity in most of the Greek Republics, to inflict death on the wives of tyrants, and even destroy tender infants, who might be tempted at a future period either to revenge or imitate their fathers. † Pretensions to sovereignty were seldom wanting to the Greeks in general, whose genealogies never failed to trace their origin among the petty kings and caciques of heroic times. This in reality occasioned such severity towards the children of Antiphon, who was a tyrant after his own manner; and the safety of the state required more sacrifices than common justice. To punish the innocent is undoubtedly a great evil; but when tyranny is allowed to ripen, and tyrants to grow strong, the measure of injustice may be increased more than an hundred fold in one day. What torrents of blood marked the combat, when Hippias and Hipparchus attacked the defenders of liberty at Lipsydrion, near mount Parnes! So many illustrious citizens then perished, that their tombs, long afterwards, continued to receive the tears of the Athenians, who repaired thither to repeat elegies which every person had

* *Lives of the ten Orators.*

† *Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Lib. VIII.*

committed

committed to memory. Alas! said they, many were the heroes who fell at Lipsydrion, on that fatal day when all was lost except hope and honor. *

VIII. INSTITUTIONS RELATIVE TO PUBLIC SECURITY IN ATTICA.

This article is at once the most interesting in the history of the Athenians, and the most honorable to their moral character and taste for civilization.

In a country like Attica, where the inhabitants were so passionate for rural life, it was necessary to maintain perfect security; otherwise no person could have slept with tranquillity, not even in the gardens of the philosophers.

Fewer acts of violence were heard of there in the course of four centuries, than are committed in one day or night between London and Greenwich.

Englishmen complain that they are destined to suffer two great evils, the influence of their kings in parliament, and that of robbers on the highway. The Athenians, who enjoyed more liberty, reasoned better, and did not consider themselves predestinated to any such calamities.

Yet the politicians of Athens felt no small embarrassment, when it became necessary to establish a patrol or marshalsey in the midst of a free city. Any class of citizens invested with this power, must have been redoubtable to the others; neither

* Eustathius, *on the Iliad, Lib. IV.*

could native Greeks be employed, who might be induced to conspire among themselves or with a foreign enemy. It was therefore confided to strangers drawn from Little Scythia, towards the mouth of the Danube. One thousand of these barbarians were taken into the pay of the Republic for the security of Athens, and stationed on the hill of the Areopagus. These men acquired in time some knowledge of the Greek language; but they were always known by their accent, and it was a fortunate circumstance that they could be thus distinguished from the citizens.*

The interior of Athens was divided into different districts, which belonged to certain cantons or villages, whose ground had been borrowed for the purpose of building the capital; and they continued ever after to exercise their jurisdiction and territorial authority in the midst of the city.† Each district, called *Come*, regulated its own police, and elected annually, as in the country, a Demarch; but a more general inspection was committed to the Astynomes by day; and to the Sophronistes, or Castigators, during the night. Whenever they encountered any citizens wearing swords, their orders were to have them arrested and conducted immediately before a magistrate.

None but barbarians, says Thucydides, are armed with swords in the streets; and the Athenians

* Ariſtophanes, ΘΕΣΜΟΦΟΡ.

† The cantons contained, either totally or in part, within the walls of Athens were *Eretria*, *Cydathenæa*, *Sphetios*, *Melita*, *Coilé*, and the *Ceramichus*, which formed the six districts of the city.

nians were the first to renounce this savage custom, so contrary to public tranquillity and that spirit of order which should reign in great towns. Yet the citizens of Athens were obliged to provide themselves with a complete suit of armour, and to parade in array of battle, whenever a general order was given by the Archons. During the whole night, the sonorous notes of certain brazen instruments served as signals to the watch, and were heard in all the cities of European Greece. * No such police, however, was established in the Greek towns of Asia: and Pliny assures us, that on his arrival at Nicomedia, he could see none of those pumps called Syphons, nor any species of fire buckets. From this we may judge of the negligence of the Asiatic Greeks, not only in administration, but in every thing relative to social order. Never would the Nicomedians have thought of constructing Syphons, had they not been constrained by Pliny; for it was their custom to remain tranquil while the principal edifices of the town were a prey to fire, without attempting to oppose its progress. †

In ancient times, it could not have been very difficult to preserve an exact police in Athens, where, Socrates says, no beggar was ever seen. ‡ Indigence did not appear there until after the Peloponesian war, when it became unavoidable from the manner in which Attica had been ravaged by the

* These kind of bells are mentioned by Thucidides and Suidas. † Pliny's *Letters to Trajan.* ‡ *Areopagit.*

 Lacedæmonians

Lacedæmonians. Thucydides acknowledges that the land was not cultivated, neither could a single sheep or goat then be found on all the mountains of Diacri; and this must have produced swarms of beggars even where none existed before.

Mendicity without doubt originated from wars, and was increased in peace by injudicious taxes; but when this calamity until then unknown, had alarmed the sensibility of the Athenians, they surpassed all the nations of the earth in their generosity towards the sufferers. The Republic undertook the maintenance of all its invalids, and provided for every orphan boy whose father had perished in the fleets or armies of the state.

This institution, says Plato, does infinite honor to our morals, and must render our name immortal; for it is wiser than any law, and confers more glory than the greatest victory. *

We must not suppose that all these poor unfortunate people were shut up in prisons, like those monuments of human extravagance called hospitals; for they received from the treasurers of the Republic a fixed sum daily from an obole, to half an attic drachma. Lysias, the Orator, has left us one of his pleadings in favor of an old man whose pension had been stopped, under pretence that he was able to exercise some mechanical profession. Although this cause seems little calculated for jesting, yet Lysias has contrived to throw the

* In the *Menexines*, or *funeral oration*.

greatest

greatest ridicule on the judges. If you, says he, addressing the tribunal, decide to-day that my client is not an invalid, he will to-morrow place himself on the list of candidates to be elected Archon: and he then described this citizen as laboring under so many infirmities, that it was altogether impossible for him to exist by any branch of industry.*

The Athenians, says Aristides, can boast of three admirable institutions, unknown to all other nations, of Europe and Asia: funeral eulogies fail not to be performed annually to the memory of the dead, old men are maintained, and provision is made for orphans until they arrive at the age of puberty.‡ When these nurslings of the state were capable of entering into society they received, from the Republic, a complete suit of armour, and had permission to follow their inclinations, by applying themselves either to the marine, agriculture, sciences, or arts. Amidst so many trades every person was sure of finding employment.

Solon had the prosperity of Athenian industry so much at heart, that he issued a law against idlers. It was not, however, long observed, and many even pretended that this legislator had no right to propose any thing so totally opposite to the genius of a free people. True liberty, says

* The invalids could not be placed on the list of candidates for the office of Archon.

‡ Aristides, in the *harrangue pronounced at the Panathenæa.*

Socrates

Socrates, is enjoyed only by those who work when they please, and are idle at will; he failed not to put his maxim in practice, for nothing was so delightful to him as reposing during the heat of summer, under those lofty pines which shaded the banks of the Ilissus. This was the taste of the Athenians in general; and that no accidents might disturb such tranquil enjoyments, they preserved the most exact order in Attica, by means of a militia formed entirely of adolescents. Too young for military service, they possessed sufficient force and intrepedity to prevent robbers from assembling in the mountains, or haunting the numerous caves in that country. It was necessary besides to guard a number of small bays, where the pirates of the Mediterranean could easily have made descents by night.

Æschines the orator, according to his own account, had been employed two years in this internal service, where the Athenian youth acquired the first notions of arms. * The Republic reaped many advantages from this military institution, which was regarded as the scourge of banditti; but pirates have since desolated the shores of Attica, and destroyed every maritime village from Eleusis to Sunium, and thence even to Rhamnus. At this day nothing is seen but scattered ruins, on a

* The Athenians entered into the militia of the young men or Peripoles, at the age of eighteen years, and left it at twenty.

coast

coast of eighty miles in extent; while swarms of Caloyers, or Greek monks, possess all the interior cantons, where either wine or olives are produced: every thing is theirs around mount Hymettus, as well as in the neighbourhood of mount Pentelichus, where they have their chief monastery; but so totally does ignorance prevail there, that not one amongst them can read. *

Such are the effects of disorder, anarchy, and ignorance in that very country which was the source of legislation, policy, sciences, arts, and all that distinguishes civilized nations from barbarians.

In renouncing, as we ought, every idea of absolute perfection, so far beyond human attainment, it must be acknowledged, that whatever abuses may have existed among the institutions of Athens, yet the whole system affords a picture highly interesting to the human understanding. It is scarcely possible to imagine, among all practicable combinations, any wiser or better conducted measures; and considering the distant ages in which they were introduced, they appear almost incredible.—We, who have profited from the discoveries and

* It is precisely in the eighteenth century that the ignorance of the modern Greeks has most increased. About the year one thousand six hundred and seventy five, the Caloyers of mount Pentelichus possessed still some books; but in the year one thousand seven hundred and sixty-five, not a single one remained, and they did not even remember that any thing of the kind had ever existed among them. *Doctor Chandler's Travels in Greece.*

faults

faults of so many different nations, may boast of our knowledge, but cannot pretend to any inventions in legislation; and no country in Europe depending on its own genius, without either guide or master, could ever have equalled the progress of the Athenians. What efforts were necessary to overturn feodality! and after having demolished this edifice, so many of its ruins yet remain that the best laws are darkened by their shadow. Neither were our struggles fewer in repressing the pretensions of those, who, on the banks of the Tiber, wished to appropriate the riches of nations inhabiting along the Sein and the Danube. From such usurpations the greatest confusion took place in all the governments of Europe; and anarchy began at length to disappear, only in proportion as we became acquainted with the monuments of ancient Greece. Thus, it may reasonably be inferred that the Europeans, if left to their own faculties, would never have made any considerable progress in legislation. Even the Romans must have remained barbarians, had not their good sense pointed out the expediency of adopting the laws of Athens.— We have observed how much they were productive of liberty, happiness, and power; but when neglected, the glory of Rome began to decline, until its inhabitants degenerated into abject slaves, and the most corrupt of mankind.

END OF THE SIXTH SECTION.

SECT. VII

SECT. VII.

ON THE STATE OF THE FINE ARTS AT ATHENS,

1. PAINTING; AND THE VENUS OF COS, AND OF GNIDUS

Among the Greeks, the genius of one man has often effected more than all the efforts of the multitude; and as Homer was the father of epic poetry, so did historical painting originate with Polygnotus. This art had hitherto produced nothing capable of pleasing the eye, but with him it began to acquire the magical power of speaking even to the heart.

Polygnotus, as an original artist, deserves more consideration than all those who have followed his footsteps; and we shall, therefore, endeavour to point out his many excellencies, as well as faults, of which likewise he had no small share. Yet the force of his imagination stamped painting with a kind of national character; and his manner was perpetuated among the principal schools of Greece, in the same way that all the compositions of versifiers partook more or less of the style and colouring of Homer.

This great master, born in the island of Thasos, about five hundred years before our Era, was at first uncertain as to his destiny, and did not know

whether

whether nature had intended him for a poet or a painter. He began, therefore, by studying not only the Iliad and Odyssey, but likewise all the epic poems then extant, such as the Minyad, the Illustrious Women, the Return from Hell, and many others, where sufficient mythological subjects were found, to adorn all the temples and porticos of Europe and Asia. It was then Polygnotus, sensible of his vocation, undertook to give bodies and colours to the ideas of the poets. The taking of Troy was the favorite scene he represented at Athens, Delphi, and most probably in many other parts of Greece.

That event, forever memorable, contained so many interesting circumstances, and such terrible situations, that it seems almost impossible to combine or unite them. But no obstacles could check the enthusiasm of this artist, who sometimes introduced more than eighty figures into one picture, and raised himself as if by magic, to such lofty ideas and sublime conceptions, that they fill the mind with astonishment. An action, unfortunately but too frequent at that time in all towns taken by assault, afforded him the most difficult task that ever presented itself to the imagination of man.—He dared to paint Cassandra, the daughter of Priam, at the moment she had been violated by Ajax in the temple of Minerva: a veil partly covered the face of this unfortunate captive; but the blush of confusion was visible on her front, and she

discovered

discovered all the symptoms of modesty, insulted by a monster who has been called a hero.

The Athenians were charmed with this picture above every thing, and they could not sufficiently admire the happy conception and judgement displayed in surmounting so many difficulties; but one circumstance more than the rest fixed their attention. Under the fictitious name of LAODICE, he had introduced a very beautiful female figure, totally unconnected either with the siege of Troy, or any historical events relative to his subject; and this was called by the Greek artists a *Parergon*, or digression. As the Athenians had great penetration, they soon discovered in this stranger the famous Elpinice, daughter of Miltiades, and the beloved sister of Cimon, who had brought Polygnotus to Athens, after having conquered the island of Thasos, in the year four hundred and sixty-three before our Era.*

When the mystery became known, the moralists of Athens decided that Elpinice had exceeded the limits of modesty, by exposing herself to the eyes of the painter as a model, most probably, for all the female figures of the piece; and even for that of Cassandra, although, indeed, it did not appear that she had been ravished. But, previous to this censure, they should have considered, that from the great scarcity of fine forms in Greece, the painters could seldom find any sufficiently perfect for their purpose.

* Plutarch's *life of Cimon*, and Thucydides, lib. I.

We

We are informed by Cicero, that in the town of Crotona, which, according to somech istorians, contained upwards of one hundred thousand inhabitants, Zeuxis could not find any woman at all qualified to be the model for a picture of Helen, intended to be placed in the temple of Juno, on the promontory of Lacinium. He had, therefore no other resource than to copy the individual beauties of five different virgins, in order to form his ideal figure; and this production, when completed, was far from answering the great expectations it had raised. The Helen of Zeuxis, although admired by some artists, never attracted the multitude; but the Cassandra of Polygnotus preserved the greatest reputation even in the days of Lucian. *

The difficulty of finding beautiful objects, among the women of Greece, must have been very great indeed, when Praxiteles and Apelles were obliged to have recourse to the same person for the charms of the Venus of Gnidus, executed in white marble, and the Venus of Cos, drawn in colours. It is asserted by Athenæus, who was much better informed on this point than Pliny the naturalist, that both these famous productions, the picture, as well as the statue, were copied after the courtesan Phryne, who, born at Thespia in Bæotia, had exercised her empire at Athens. ‡ After having studied several attitudes, she fancied to have discovered one more favorable than the rest for displaying all

her

* In the ΕΙΚΩΝΕΣ or *Images*.

† DIPNOSOPH. lib. XIII.

her bodily perfections. Both Painter and Sculptor were obliged to adopt her favorite posture, while she tyranized over the eyes of the one, and the soul of the other.

From this cause, the Venus of Gnidus, and the Venus of Cos, were so perfectly alike, that it was impossible to remark any difference in their features, contour, or more particularly in their attitude. Both represented Phryne coming out of the sea, on the beach of Sciron, where she was wont to bathe in the Saronic gulf, between Athens and Eleusis. But the painting of Apelles was far from exciting so much enthusiasm among the Greeks as the sculpture of Praxiteles. They fancied the marble moved; that it seemed to speak; and their illusion, says Lucian, was so great, that they ended by applying their lips to those of the Goddess. Anthology, likewise, contained a far greater number of verses in honor of the Venus of Gnidus, than were ever produced by the admirers of the Venus of Cos. *

Since that period, the triumph of Sculpture over Painting has been decided; and it is not difficult to prove by physical reasons, that the one of these arts muſt be superior to the other, when the artists, as in the present case, are equal in talents and genius.

It is, however, but just to observe, that the gentle bending of the body, and charming in-

* Lucian in the ΕΡΩΤΕΣ, or *Loves*; and in the *Anthology*.

flexion of the arms, assumed by Phryne, afforded the greatest advantages to the Sculptor; and were altogether unfavorable for the Painter, who was thus subjected to the imperious will of a model, too animated for his pencil.

To form a more extensive idea of the manner of Polygnotus, it is necessary to return to that portico called the *Pœcile*, which contained examples of the astonishing boldness of his composition.

Next to the taking of Troy was seen the battle of Marathon, where he allowed himself more licence than ever Pindar ventured to exercise in a lyric poem. Minerva and Hercules were made to descend from heaven; the small town of Marathon was personified in the form of a genius; and the first Anachronism took place there that ever appeared in painting. Theseus, drawn from the shades of death, had to witness a combat some centuries after his decease. *

This was exactly the same thing, as representing Clovis at the battle of Fontenoi, or Charlemain at the siege of Gibraltar; and he rendered the licence more conspicuous by marking on the picture the names of the different figures in capital letters. Miltiades and his colleagues, however, were not distinguished in that manner, because it must have rendered them too illustrious not to excite the jealousy of the Athenian citizens, who

* Pausanias, Attics.

had

had fought with as much bravery as the chiefs of the army.*

The introduction of written characters to indicate great personages demonstrates clearly, that Polygnotus, without any idea whatever of Perspective, had ranged his figures in winding lines from the bottom of the picture to the very top of the sky. This must always have been the case, when a group contained forty or fifty personages; for the Greeks knew nothing of any other position, as appears by that famous bas-relief, commonly called the Apotheosis of Homer, where the figures of the first rank have their names also inserted, and are placed exactly on the same plan with those of Polygnotus.

From this it follows, of course, that the Greek painters always appeared to greatest advantage in representing some single object, unconnected with any of the rules of Perspective. The pictures most generally admired by the vulgar, as well as by enlightened judges, like the Jalyses of Protogenes, the Venus of Apelles, and the Glycera of Pausias, were all of this description.

It is astonishing that the moderns should have lost so much time in conjectures, and obstinate disputes concerning the knowledge of the ancients in Perspective; when the Greek themselves have

* Miltiades, who was represented in this picture, wished greatly to have his name inserted likewise; but Æschines says, that the people of Athens thought this improper, and refused to gratify him. *Harangue against Ctesiphon.*

acknowledged their deficiency in that point. No artist of those days ever attempted to paint a landscape, or if he did make the essay, we require no other proof of its being unsuccessful, than, that his name is forgotten.

In reading a description of mount Hymettus, we are struck with the admirable points of view in different parts of Attica and Peloponnesus; but the citadel of Corinth excelled all others for extent of prospect, variety of objects, and successive deepenings even to the very foot of mount Parnassus. Although a country like this, abounding in picturesque scenes, enriched with monuments of architecture, and ornamented with sacred groves, fountains, and cascades, seemed calculated to invite the pencil, yet no artist there ever attached himself to landscape. The language of the Greeks had no word to express that species of painting; for the term Chorography belonged solely to the science of geographers. * Neither did their technical Dictionary contain any thing analogous to sea-pieces, founded on aerial Perspective, of which they were likewise ignorant, as appears by all the monuments of Herculaneum. † To authorities of this nature it would be absurd to oppose the assertions of such a writer as Philostratus,

* See the definition of *Chorography* in Ptolemy. Geograph. lib. I.

† *Observations on the paintings of Herculaneum*, by Messrs. Cochin and Bellicart.

whose

whose book, called the *Images*, is the production of a Sophist entirely ignorant of the elements of painting.

We are informed by the ancients themselves that their optics consisted of three parts; the first taught architects how to distribute the entrances and windows of a building to greatest advantage: the second respected mirrors; and the third, called Scenography, belonged chiefly to theatrical decorations. The great art of the latter consisted in arranging the ornaments so as to prevent one illusion from injuring another. *

Linear Perspective, as practised by Painters, we may be assured was not contained in the elements of ancient optics: otherwise the productions found in Herculaneum would not have trespassed so grossly against all the rules of art, both in the points where the lines should terminate, and in the aspect of objects. They were often represented as seen from below, when, according to their position, the real view was from above.

II. ETHOGRAPHY, AND THE CHOICE OF SUBJECTS IN THE PAINTINGS OF THE GREEKS.

The chief merit, or rather the great force of Polygnotus, consisted in Ethography, or the art of painting manners, characters, and passions. In this part he was far superior to Zeuxis, whose best

* *Letters of Cicero to Atticus.* lib, II. Vitruvius, *Architect.* lib. I. and Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights.* lib. XVI.

drawn figures wanted those charms so much admired by the Greeks. * Thus the history of painting, at that period, presents one very remarkable circumstance to our observation. We find execution, which is an effect of art, making great progress; while expression, the immediate emanation of genius, was visibly on the decline. Zeuxis, who appeared sixty years after Polygnotus, could never equal his characters; but he surpassed him greatly in colouring, and in the effects of the clare-obscure.

Epic poetry, the theatre, and painting, says Aristotle, are the three methods of exhibiting human nature. Some, like Homer, the tragic poets, and the painter Polygnotus, exaggerate so far as to ascribe the greatest perfections to man; or, with the comic poets, and the painter Pauso, represent him as childish and ridiculous; while very few imitate the painter Dionysius in copying mankind exactly as they are. It is to be lamented, that an artist, so exact in his imitations of nature, should have possessed such weak talents, that he has scarcely been able to attain the portico of the temple of Memory.

* Aristotle assures us, in the most positive manner, that none of the productions of Zeuxis discovered the smallest trace of Ethography, in which Polygnotus excelled. ʽΟ ΜΕΝ ΓΑΡ ΠΟΛΥΓΝΩΤΟΣ ʼΑΓΑΘΟΣ ΗΘΟΓΡΑΦΟΣ, ʽΗ ΔΕ ΖΕΥΞΙΔΟΣ ΓΡΑΦΗ ʼΟΥΔΗΝ ΕΧΕΙ ʼΗΘΟΣ

After this, no faith can be given to what Pliny says of a painting by Zeuxis, where he seemed to have represented the very manners of the personages.

This

This passage, translated freely from Aristotle's Art of Poetry, conveys very accurate ideas of the different parts of historical painting among the ancients, which consisted evidently of a medium, and two extremes. But the former was always considered by the Greeks as inseparable from incapacity, and they reserved their praises for those hardy compositions, where man seemed less connected with earth than with heaven. This manner of seeing and judging proceeded from the nature of their education. The works of Homer, as we have already observed, instead of being read only at an advanced period in life, were given to children at the age of seven years, and the impression made on their ardent minds, by the first reading, was indelible.

It is not easy to determine exactly what was the favorite manner of Pauso, who deprived his figures of all dignity, and made them resemble those ridiculous characters exhibited in comedy.—This was not the manner of the Ryparographs, who made choice of low objects from kitchens and workshops; neither did it belong to those paintings of fantasies, called dreams by the Greeks, of which some essays were seen in the Lycæum at Athens. *

Pauso executed, most probably, satyrical pieces, representing, in caricatura, certain bodily and mental failings. Such objects may amuse malignity, for an instant, but good taste must soon reject

* Xenophon in the *expedition of the younger Cyrus*, lib. VII.

 them

them for ever. The maxim ought to be invariable, and almost sacred among artists, who aspire to the praise of their cotemporaries, as well as of posterity, to choose the most agreeable subjects, and introduce none but such ideas as are calculated to produce pleasing illusions.

Seneca relates, that Parrhasius inflicted an extraordinary species of torture on one of his slaves, already advanced in years, that he might copy, after nature, the punishment of Prometheus, to be consecrated in the temple of Minerva at Athens. This supposed atrocity is happily nothing more than a fiction; and, like many other extravagant subjects, was only proposed to exercise the young declamers in the Roman Schools. * But if Parrhasius has really merited no reproach, it is more than can be said of those modern painters, who have represented all the imaginary cruelties of the Golden Legend, and Martyrology. Artists, it may be said, are entitled to the privilege of exercising their tragical talents without our having any right to dispute their taste, or to analyze the pleasures of those spectators, who delight in such images and subjects. But it must be observed that terror, or the *Phoberon* of the Greek Tragedians,

* *Controvers.* lib. X.

All that Seneca relates afterwards, concerning the manner in which the Elians cut off the hands of Phidias, after he had finished the Jupiter of Olympia, to prevent him from making any thing to equal it, can only be considered as fabulous in the highest degree.

is the situation of the mind when affected by great fear; while horror is a real spasm or convulsion, and consequently very different in its operations. The sculptor of the famous Laocoon has erred in two essential points; for that statue inspires nothing but horror, and does not preserve an exact imitation of nature. The poet, who imagined so many windings and twistings, consulted his own enthusiasm more than he did reality, because no serpent ever attacked any man in that manner. Mountebanks are seen daily in the Levant, who have taught tame adders to entwine themselves, in this way, round the human body; but venemous reptiles, when furious, never have recourse to such attitudes, as every person knows, who has seen the rattle-snake, that most dreadful of all serpents.

General rule: subjects which cannot appear with success on the tragic scene, ought never to be represented in painting, or sculpture, with the intention of exciting either fear or pity.

When Æschylus had his tragedy of Eumenides performed at Athens, the decorators filled the stage with so many shocking images, and infernal scenes, that women miscarried, and children expired in convulsions. This fact justifies the observation already made, relative to the difference really subsisting between terror and horror: neither would the Athenians ever afterwards permit the directors of the theatre to introduce choirs of

furies

furies, entwined with serpents like Laocoon, nor to employ other inventions worthy of Cocytus and Tenarus.

Yet this same tragedy, productive of such fatal effects on the stage, occasioned nothing of that kind in the closet; while the Antigonus of Sophocles, and the Orestes of Euripides, could not be read without great emotion. It appears, however, that the artists of antiquity took few of their subjects from the tragic poets. The Greeks in general copied Homer, and the Romans adopted the ideas of Virgil. The fourth book of the Eneid, more read than of any other, because of the adventures of Dido and Æneas, obtained also the preference in painting, in bas-relief, and in tapestry. This story is now so predominant, says Macrobius, that all others are forgotten. Painters were indefatigable in reproducing what they knew would be agreeable to spectators. It was seen every where, and has been found more than once in the ruins of Herculaneum. *

This must not lead us to suppose, that Virgil had greatly surpassed Appollonius, from whom he copied the loves of Jason and Medea, which no painter ever considered as proper for a series of interesting paintings. The preference given to

* Macrob. SATURN. lib. V.
Ovid says positively that no part of the Æneid was so much read among the Romans as the fourth book.

Nec legitur pars ulla magis, de corpore toto,
Quam non legitimo fœdere junctus amor.]

the

the former arose from the moral character of the personages, as well as a concurrence of mythological circumstances. Dido, weak and unfortunate, inspired pity; while Medea, on the contrary, excited horror even in her most tender scenes, for every person knew how many atrocities would succeed the instants she passed with Jason. No person could therefore think on the cause, without trembling for effects too dreadful, says Horace, to be introduced on the stage, and consequently totally unfit for the chisel, or the pencil.

At Delphi, in Phocis, was seen the greatest of all the compositions of Polygnotus, where he exhibited the whole spectacle of Hell, according to the ideas of the different poets, and yet had the art of avoiding every thing too hideous or disagreeable. None of the eighty figures inserted there were at all frightful, if we except the demon Eurynome, the drawing of which was besides imperfect. But among all the inhabitants of Tenarus, none excited so much compassion as two Grecian women, condemned to eternal torments for having neglected to initiate themselves in the mysteries of Ceres.

When Apelles arrogated the glory of composing with more grace than all the other painters of his time, he owed this superiority, in great part, to a happy selection of subjects, as well as to his wonderful talents. The picture of Diana, surrounded by her nymphs, on the brow of mount Taygetus, was susceptible of all the charms of his art. In the midst

midst of so many accomplished mortals appeared a goddess, still more beautiful; distinguished by an air of majesty, and taller than her companions, she resembled a laurel rising above the myrtles, which border the Eurotas.

Lucian proposed, as a model for the graceful style, a composition of the painter Ætion. It excited such exstacy in the judges of Olympia, that one of them exclaimed before all the Greeks, I reserve the olive crown for the Athletæ, but, as a reward for this picture, I give my daughter in marriage to Ætion. The subject of the piece was the nuptials of Alexander with Roxana; Ephestion carried the torch of Hymen, and next followed the God himself, surrounded by a multitude of Loves, who were seen sporting with the arms and buckler of Alexander, or lifting up the veil of Roxana, and discovering a part of her charms.*

This idea has since been copied a thousand times by different modern artists; and yet Ætion might be justly accused of having employed too many Genii, and other personified characters. When a just medium is not preserved, in such matters, historical paintings are converted into allegories; and this fault ſhould be carefully avoided, because it renders every subject at once vague and confused.

Parrhasius, a pupil of the Athenian school, who is known to have been cotemporary with Socrates,

* Lucian, in his *Herodotus*, or *Ætion*.

was

was the first of the great masters of Greece, under whose pencil voluptuousness degenerated into the most revolting obscenity; and he became at length so licentious as to paint Atalanta, plunged in the most scandalous debauches of the women of Lesbos. This picture was such that it gained admittance into the collection of Tiberius; and that circumstance alone is sufficient to give some idea of the subject.*

Compositions of this kind increased so much afterwards, that the poets, who were not always very severe moralists, complained greatly of the dissoluteness of the painters: they add, said they, to constitutional fire so many new flames, that nature itself is at length consumed. In reality, the Grecian women were so much agitated by the vapors of heating wines, and the sight of so many objects calculated to irritate the senses, that they found nothing more difficult than to command their passions. Under favor of a foolish mythology, Heroes, Gods, and Goddesses were introduced into the most indecent scenes; and this tended not a little to authorize the greatest depravity. If immortals, said the Greeks, allow themselves such pleasures and enjoyments, why should we, who may be said to exist but for a day, blush to tread in their footsteps? This sophism was so complicated, that the priests and Hierophantes could not refute it, because they patronised those

* Suetonius, in the *Life of Tiberius.*

monstrous

monstrous fables, which always furnished arms to combat virtue.

But Parrhasius, and all those who practised the same style, were the more inexcusable, as Paganism, in general, presented them with the most agreeable and graceful images. Never did any more picturesque religion appear upon earth than that of the Greeks: their offerings, ſacrifices, assemblies, and holy revels, were equally favorable for painting, bas-relief, and sculpture. Young priestesses, adorned with festoons of amaranths or violets, and sacrificers, crowned with ivy, holding the thyrsus in one hand, and the cup in the other, were personages infinitely more interesting than the ecclesiastics of our day, who, muffled up in the most gothic robes, are justly excluded from appearing among the productions of the fine arts.

Morals were little affected by the nakedness of statues, because people were generally accustomed to such sights throughout European Greece. Yet this custom originated in Asia Minor, and more particularly in Ionia. At the time of the Peloponnesian war, the statuaries of Athens bestowed drapery on the Graces, but ever afterwards they were represented naked.

The various kinds of white marble, found on the Continent, and in the islands of Greece, were, from their nature, more fit for naked figures, than dresses of any kind. The same observation likewise extends to the bronze of Delos, Egina, and Corinth, which communicated a disagreeable rudeness

ness to the best cast draperies. To this was joined the ambition of the great sculptors, who, to display the beauties of their art, avoided every thing that diminished the effect of the design. It was besides necessary to discover the exact expression of the muscles; for in them consisted that life and action, which the Greeks knew so well how to inspire either in representing a man, or a God.

III. SCHOOLS FOR PAINTING IN GREECE, AND THE ART OF ENGRAVING INVENTED BY VARRO.

It is certain that the most ancient school for painting, of which any positive traces can be found among the Greeks, was established in the isle of Rhodes, at the time of Anacreon. By reading attentively two odes of that poet, any person must be convinced, that the Rhodians employed melted wax only for mixing their colours.* This indeed was a procedure both complicated and difficult: but such has been in general the progress of human knowledge, in developing the greater part of the arts, as well as of the sciences.

The manner of employing the wax was properly a kind of Encaustic, which with all their efforts, the moderns have not been able to revive. Count Caylus has confounded the very instruments employed by the Greeks for this purpose: the principal of all was a burning iron, called in their language

* ODE XXVIII and XXIX.

Cauterion;

Cauterion; * but they sometimes had recourse to the more active heat of burning gall-nuts, to force the wax into the ground of the picture; and it was afterwards polished like a mirror.

This method had two very great disadvantages; the colours were never sufficiently blended in the half tints, and the picture, when finished, could only be viewed in one position, because in all others the light was reflected so strongly, that the subject became confused. These inconveniences were compensated by a merit to which no other paintings of those days could pretend; for the Encaustic insured a kind of eternity to the piece, and made it sustain, in an astonishing manner, the attacks of time, during the lapse of many centuries.

Polygnotus, who, in all probability, was educated in the Rhodian school, practised, it is well known, the method of Encaustics; and the consistency he communicated to his colours, in the battle of Marathon, enabled them to resist the action of the air for nine hundred years, without receiving any material injury, although exposed in an open portico. In the time of Synesius, this painting tempted the avarice of a Roman Pro-consul, who removed it from Athens. † Constantinople may

* Count Caylus in his Dissertations on the Fine Arts and Antiquities, has confounded the instruments proper for Encaustic painting with those used in burning figures on ivory, for which the *Cestron* was employed, and not the *Cauterion*.

† Collection of the works of *Synesius*.

be supposed to have been the tomb of this, as well as of many other masterpieces, taken out of Greece to decorate a town, where taste never reigned, either when it was the capital of the Christians, or of the Turks.

Cimon, son of Miltiades, had formed the project of embellishing the interior of Athens, but was prevented by his exile or ostracism. Pericles pursued the same plan, and it was under the patronage of this demagogue that the famous academy for painting, since called the school of Athens, was founded. The characters are not known at this day, which constituted the difference between this and the school of Sicyon the most dangerous of its rivals, and the place indeed where a competition could be dreaded. But it appears that the professors at Sicyon were very rigorous in all that related to design; and when they had produced such a scholar as Apelles, they did not any longer fear the jealousy of the Athenians.

We must suppose, that the ancient critics knew how to distinguish the productions of the different academies, either by the tone of their colouring, or the taste of the design. What is generally called the Greek contour, or that line nearly perpendicular, extending from the top of the forehead to the point of the nose in several ancient statues,* is not a real character, as some have believed; neither has it been copied after

* Winkelman, *Histoire de l'Art.*

a number of living models. In no country of the universe was nature ever subjected to such geometrical proportions; and therefore the style of this design must have been adopted in some schools, for no other apparent reason than to make the forehead very low, because the women of Athens had decided this to be indispensible in beauty. Thus, says Lucian, they let their hair descend in ringlets to the very top of their eye-brows; so that a small part of the front only is visible in a triangular form.*

This supposed decision of the Athenian women, who claimed at the same time an empire over fashion and taste, should have obtained no authority with masters of design. It was no less contrary to nature, than those deformed waists produced by the constant pressure of stays; and they fortunately have never been introduced among either statues or paintings. Such figures, compared by Terence, after Menander, to slender reeds, would spoil any composition; and Linnæus considers them as monstruous varieties of the human race: but in this custom we find nothing more than the same spirit of caprice, which actuates savage nations to render their heads round, flat, or pointed.

It has been pretended that the Greek islands have produced more great painters, than the two continents of Europe and Asia. To prove this

* Lucian; in the *Loves*.

assertion

assertion, such famous names are cited as Polygnotus of the isle of Thasus, Timanthes of Santos, Zeuxis of Sicily, Protogenes of Rhodes, and Apelles of the island of Cos. But all this may have been the effect of what is called chance, without depending on physical causes, or admitting any just inferences relative to the genius of islanders. Besides, this catalogue of the most celebrated painters of antiquity contains at least one geographical error: for, although Protogenes inhabited a garden in the environs of Rhodes, he was not less a nativeof Caunus, on the continent of Asia and some traecs of that town still exist under the name of Kaiguez in Caria.

Grecce, properly called, was a country of very small extent; but includingall the Greek towns of Asia, Africa, and Europe, from Marseilles to the extremity of the Euxine sea, and from Cyrene to the frontiers of Thrace, the scene extends to one half of what was known to the ancients on our globe. It is not surprising that so many free states, when the arts were so generally cultivated, should have produced such numbers of statuaries and painters, especially as the study of drawing formed an essential part of their education. The same thing would take place at this day, if republics were as numerous in the world, provided likewise that their artists had as much occupation as those of the Greeks.

The nature of our furniture, and the taste now predominant in decorations, have been

fatal to painting; and never were artists of that class less encouraged than at present. The cause of their inaction has not unjustly been imputed to the art of engraving, supposed to have originated with the Greeks. But none of that nation had any right to this invention; it appertained alone to Varro; and Pliny expresses himself very unequivocally, when he calls it *Inventum Varronis*. Engraved plates were first employed by him to stamp the profiles, and principal features of portraits; and afterwards the pencil was necessary to add the shades and suitable colours.

It was a woman born in Cyzicum, but then established in Italy, who possessed the happy talent of colouring such prints with uncommon taste, as well as truth. Seven hundred likenesses of illustrious men, copied in this manner from ancient busts and statues, were inserted in a Greek work, entitled by Varro HEBDOMADES, or the IMAGES.

The necessity of copying so often the same figures inspired the idea of facilitating the operation, and gave rise to this art, until then unknown. Below each portrait some Greek or Latin verses were inserted on the same plate, and to this may be traced the origin of painting with immoveable characters.*

So

* Aulus Gellius says, that Varro, in his Hebdomades, had placed the following verse below the portrait of Homer:

Capella

So important a discovery, says Pliny, was received with general applause by the learned of every denomination. It was not only easy, by this method, to multiply objects for the gratification of an idle curiosity, but likewise those figures absolutely necessary to render books of science intelligible, such as plans of architecture, and geographical maps. Agathodemon, of Alexandria, generally called a mechanician, was really an engraver, who executed, after the manner of Varro, those charts scattered in all the copies of the geography of Ptolemy. Thus, all these details demonstrate more and more, that the ancients had many inventions, which the moderns are accustomed to deny, either from ignorance or envy.

II.—APOGRAPHUMS, OR PRODUCTIONS EITHER COPIED OR SUPPOSED.

Many original productions of genius and art could be reckoned among the statues covering the

Capella Homeri candida hæc tumulum indicat;
Quod hâc Jetæ faciant mortuo sacra.

By this we find that the victim which the inhabitants of the island Io immolated on the tomb of Homer, must always have been colored in white, in the engravings of Varro. Pliny likewise may be consulted. where he says, *Lala Cyzicena perpetua virgo Marci Varronis* INVENTA *Romæ et penicillo pinxit.*

surface

surface of Greece; but the greater part were only imitations more or less servile.

The Mercury, placed at the entry of the Ceramicus of Athens, had served to cast so many copies, that it became quite shining, from having been so often daubed with oil, in order to facilitate the impression of the moulds.*

No obstacles were ever thrown in the way of such operations by those magistrates, called Agoranomes, who had the inspection of the markets and public places. They were not considered as at all injurious to the police; and the commerce of Athens gained considerably by the number of ships, which, according to Philostratus, went loaded with statues from Piræus. Mercuries, executed in this manner, were sold to weak connoisseurs for originals, particularly when the name of some celebrated master, such as Lysippus, was fraudulently inscribed on the leg or thigh in silver letters.

Polycletus sometimes took copies of his own statues, as appears by the exact similitude of the features, and attitudes of figures taken from the same model; and this was still more observable when they were without drapery.

The most famous apographum of our day is the Venus of Medicis. The attitude of this statue, like the works of Polycletus, proves it to

* Lucan. This Mercury of Athens, so often copied, is that spoken of by Pausanias under the name of *Agoreus*.

be

be a copy of the Venus of Gnidus; and the inscription it bears, is regarded by Mr. Marietti as another forgery.* Nothing was more common in ancient times than to mark statues with false characters; and the cunning of the Greeks, in such matters, surpassed imagination. Presumptuous and vain men, who, without knowledge, wished to pass for connoisseurs, were easily caught in snares so artfully contrived; and such was the case of the Romans in general, if we except Varro, who really possessed very extensive notions, both in the theory and practice, of the fine arts.

With great exactness of proportion, the Venus of Medicis is not graceful, and the attitude somewhat confined insinuates, that, even as a copy, it cannot be considered as the work of a superior artist. Cleomenes, to whom it is ascribed, was an obscure man, whose name has never been cited by any ancient author.

Copies, accurately taken in marble, required an experienced chisel; but to counterfeit the Mercury of the Ceramicus, in brass, it was sufficient to understand the art of moulding, with-

* *Treatise on engraved stones.*

The following inscription should have been put on the Venus of Medicis; 'ΑΠΟ ΤΗΣ 'ΕΝ ΚΝΙΔΩ ΑΦΡΟΔΙ ΤΗΣ, that is, *copied after the Venus of Gnidus*; but then this statue would not have sold for so much m-ney.

out being versed in any of the elements, either of drawing, or of sculpture.

Great knowledge of literature and criticism, as well as of the arts, was necessary to prevent those, who purchased paintings, books, and statues at Athens, from being deceived by the fraudulent imposition of famous names.

In the market, called the *Libraries*, many compilations were found, decorated with such imposing and magnificent titles, that people could not refrain from perusing them. But after having passed the gilded portico, says Pliny, the whole interior of the building appeared not less bare and frightful than the deserts of Arabia.* The courtesans of Corinth were not the only people who retailed repentance at a high price; for the customers of the booksellers of Athens seldom failed to regret having read their books, and still more having purchased them. Literary speculations became so very licentious, that spurious works were attributed to celebrated authors, even during their life-time; and Galen mentions whole treatises having been published in his name, of which he had not composed a particle.† When such men as physicians interested themselves in this commerce, we may suppose, that the theologists were not idle; and in fact we have still extant an entire cata-

* *Prologue to Natural History.*

† Galen's *Catalogue of his Works.*

logue

logue of apocryphal books, published by them in the name of the divinity.

Two famous Apographums exceeded all others ever produced by the painters of Athens: the one was an imitation of the Centaurs of Zeuxis, which Lucian has described very minutely; and the other a copy of the charming Glycera of Pausias, which deserved to be placed among the finest paintings of Greece. This picture consisted of no more than the figure of a woman, employed in making crowns, or festoons of flowers. Yet the piece seemed to border on enchantment; for Pausias possessed the art of creating illusion almost in as high a degree as Apelles. Besides what were properly called apographums, Greece contained many copies of the same subject, executed by the hands of the original artists, without any apparent variation of arrangement. The taking of Troy, painted by Polygnotus at Delphi, bore great resemblance to that in the Pœcile of Athens; and it was easy to discover not only a tone of imitation, but likewise a perfect uniformity of ideas.

It is generally believed, that the Thebans had a law to punish painters, who made little progress in their art. But without laying any stress on this circumstance, hazarded by Ælian, and very improbable in all appearance, no laws existed at Athens to prevent artists from copying each other, and selling the apographums for originals.

ginals. Solon thought proper to abandon this part of the fine arts to itself, unencumbered by any chains of legislation; but the same indulgence did not extend to those people, called Dactylioglyphes, or engravers on metals and precious stones. It was severely prohibited to make any such counterfeits; neither could the impression of seals be kept in the shops where they had been engraved, because many frauds might have resulted from imitating the private signets of citizens.*

Travellers, who frequented Greece without having thoroughly studied the arts, were entirely at the discretion of those public conductors, called mystagogues. It was they who undertook to instruct strangers in every thing; but their method was less adapted to produce light, than to establish the dominion of darkness. They began their descriptive farce by reading, in a loud voice, the inscription of a monument, and then proceeded with a prolix explanation, abandoning themselves, as the Greeks generally did, to such a torrent of words, that Plutarch owns how impossible it

* Diogenes Laertius, *life of Solon*; and Monsr. Petit, *Recueil des Lois Attiques.* Besides sculptors, statuaries, turners and engravers, Athens possessed a class of artists, called *Hermoglyphes*, who engraved inscriptions on marble. The Republic paid them fifty drachmæ for copying a decree, which would afford ten days work to a modern artist.

was

was for him to bridle the loquacity of the mystagogues of Delphi.* These men should be regarded as the real inventors of all those ridiculous prodigies concerning statues and paintings, which deceived animals, by rendering them sensible to the charms of art, in opposition to their instinct. In no country of the world was impudence in lying carried to greater excess than among the Greeks; and to keep the minds of strangers in constant ecstasy, they attributed even the most trifling productions to the greatest masters. So many statues were pointed out with the pretended names of Phidias, Polycletus, and Praxiteles, that these sculptors could not have executed them all in two hundred years.

V.—STATUES OF GREECE EXECUTED IN GOLD, AND IN IVORY.

Nothing was more astonishing to travellers, who visited the temples of this country, than those prodigious statues, so dazzling to the eyes from their lustre and richness, that it was impossible for some time to discover their mechanism. When Pliny and Pausanias speak of such gigantic figures, as if they were solid

* Plutarch, in the Treatise, *why the oracles were no longer rendered in verse.*

masses

masses of gold and ivory, it is very evident, that they partook of the vulgar errors of their own times.

If we analyze the construction of the Minerva of Phidias, it will be easy to apply the same observations to the Jupiter of Olympia, the Juno of Argos, and all other statues of the same kind that ever existed in Greece.

The Minerva of Phidias, in the citadel of Athens, began to be constructed under the auspices of Pericles, and was finished during the archonship of Pythodorus, four hundred and thirty-two years before our Era. This colossus, upwards of twenty-six cubits, or thirty nine attic feet in height, represented a woman in armour, clothed with a tunic, and standing upright on a base proportioned to such an enormous mass.

As the teeth of elephants were no larger formerly than at present, it was of course necessary that Phidias, and other artists of those times, should contrive to unite different pieces by some glutinous matter. Isinglass, said to be invented by Dædalus, was generally employed for such purposes; and Ælian asserts, that it was indispensable with the artists of Greece, who wrought in ivory.*

To sustain so many pieces, the Minerva of Phidias must have consisted entirely of large bars of iron or brass, over which a sheathing of

* *History of Animals.*

cedar

cedar boards served to receive the incrustation; and all within was hollow. Lucian acknowledges, that those ostentatious works, so rich in gold and ivory, were inwardly replenished with cobwebs, and they afforded an asylum not only to insects, but to those unclean animals, which frequented the temples and altars of Greece.*

The metal parts of the Minerva of Athens were amazingly solid, particularly in the articulation of the right arm; for, a figure of victory, six feet high, was poised on the open hand, and so firmly adjusted, that its equilibrium remained unimpaired by the lapse of many ages.† The gold was laid on in flakes only, and could be removed without injuring materially the form or solidity of the colossus. Plato, who had frequent opportunities of examining this extraordinary production, says, that the face, hands, and feet, were entirely of ivory; but the pupil or iris of the eyes, consisted of coloured stones of the nature, most probably, of those pale or dull emeralds, found among the silver mines in the south of Attica.‡

The richness of the materials, and the great importance attached by superstition to such prodigious idols, appear to have deranged the optics of the ancients, and made them deviate from the

* Lucian.

† Arrian, Comment. on Epictetus, lib. II.

‡ Dialogue, called *Hippias*.

the ordinary excellence of their taste. A figure of twenty six cubits high, carrying on its hand another image larger than a common sized man, and incrusted with a patch-work, more or less concealed, could only produce a great effect, when viewed at some distance: But then the bas reliefs of the base, as well as of the buskins and shield of Minerva, were totally lost, especially in such gloomy edifices as the Greek temples, where no light could enter but by the doors; and even that passage was interrupted by the exterior colonnade, and the projection of the portico.

This gigantic work of Phidias required to be sprinkled frequently with water, in order to preserve the tenacity of the glue; otherwise it could not have resisted the great contraction of the ivory during the heat of summer.

In Elis, it was supposed, that quantities of oleaginous matter, thrown continually on the pavement of the temple, would answer the same purpose. Experience proved the inefficacy of this method; for the great heats, common in the valley of Pisa, towards the summer solstice, made the pieces of ivory start from the Jupiter of Phidias. An artist of Messeina, named Damophon, undertook to repair the damage sustained by this accident; and his bold manner of effecting that purpose excited universal admiration.*

* Dissertation of Mr. Heyne on the manner of working ivory, in use among the Greeks. *Bibliotheque des Beaux Arts.*

The priests of Olympia preserved with the greatest care, a very ancient monument, called vulgarly *the coffer of Cypselus*, the body of which, constructed of cedar, and incrusted with gold and ivory, might probably have inspired the first idea of executing the statues already described. At least the bud of such productions could easily be discovered in this offering of the Cypselides, supposed by some learned men to have been the work of a Corinthian artist. Others fancy that this monument was brought from Asia into Greece,* where sound policy should have proscribed for ever all such absurd ostentation in religious matters. This mode became doubly pernicious to the state, because it not only kept a considerable part of national wealth out of circulation, but likewise rendered the exportation of specie in some measure unavoidable. Very considerable sums must have gone into the hands of strangers for the ivory employed in constructing such a statue as that of Jupiter at Olympia. The spoils of more than three hundred elephants were said to have been employed there; and this calculation is not extravagant, if we consider that the figure of the god, although seated on a throne, had fifty four feet,

* *Histoire des progres et de la decadence des sciences dans la Grece*, by Mr. Meiners.

of

of elevation.* Phidias indeed was greatly censured for having violated, in a great degree, all the laws of symmetry, by placing this huge and Egyptian, like colossus in a dome, the height of which in no part exceeded sixty feet: and the effect was such, that it shocked the eyes not only of critics, but even of those who were ignorant of the arts.

From such extreme magnificence, some idea may be formed of the great riches accruing to the Elians, from the commerce of the Olympic games. Yet they did not profess themselves to be merchants, but holy men, whom the gods had taken under their special protection. This reputation might have continued much longer, had not the impiety of the Lacedæmonians led to the first pillage of the sacred depositories of Elis. The only places respected by those robbers were the temple and grove of Olympia, where no habitations existed. During the time of the games and fairs, says Lucian, temporary huts and sheds of canvass, or reeds, were erected there, as in the markets of Athens, and other commercial places. In that part of Peloponnesus, the river Alpheus was not drinkable; and it frequently happened that water could not be found to refresh the spectators in those great heats

* Léo Allatius, Comment. on the work of Philo of Byzantium, entitled, ΠΡΕΙ ΤΩΝ ʽΕΠΤΑ ΘΕΑΜΑΤΩΝ. The Olympic foot spoken of here, is nearly equal to the English measure.

they

they had to encounter, at the celebration of the Olympic games.*

Such was in general the character of the Greeks; they often neglected the most necessary objects to throw away enormous sums on works of magnificence, destitute of any essential utility. For more than five hundred years the Elians took no pains whatever to supply Olympia with wholesome water; and Pericles, so far from thinking of aqueducts, could never be prevailed upon even to construct a bridge over the little Cephisus. It was the emperor Adrian who undertook at length to provide water for the town of Athens, and to form likewise a safe communication across the Cephisus, between the territories of Attica and Eleusis, on the most frequented road of Greece.

The Romans discovered indisputably a more solid manner of thinking. Although exceedingly attached to pomp, they did not neglect any works of public utility; and never risked their lives by swimming across a torrent, as the Athenians must have done, previous to the arrival of Adrian.

Greece may be said to have been the country of contrasts. The barren rocks of Attica contained plantations of violets; but in the fertile valleys of Elis, so well calculated for gardens, no flowers were seen but such as grew wild along

* Lucian, in the *death of Peregrinus*; *and in his Herodotus.*

the banks of the Alpheus; and Olympia, where a great town might have been expected, was not entitled to be called a village.

VI.—MUSIC OF THE GREEKS.

All those, who have hitherto spoken of the music of the Greeks, may justly be considered as very weak observers. Their ignorance of the natural history of man has made them confound epochs totally different, without ever perceiving the changes which must take place in the organs of nations, as they advance from savage life towards civilization.

It is a fact demonstrated by numberless experiments, that the most imperfect music produces infinitely stronger sensations with barbarians, than the softest melody can excite among polished nations. Mr. Forster, in his voyage round the world, has remarked, that a man belonging to the crew of Captain Cook performed great miracles in the south sea, and threw the islanders into inconceivable extasies by playing on the bagpipe. In our days likewise we have the example of a missionary, who despairing of any success from his theology, betook himself to a guitar, and enticed whole bands of savages to follow him, as if by enchantment. In this manner he introduced a fixed mode

mode of life among a race of men, who from their cradle had never quitted the bosom of thick forests, nor ceased to wander like wild beasts from one solitude to another.

After such experiments, it is not difficult to conceive, that in regions equally barbarous with Greece or Thrace, in the days of Amphion and Orpheus, very wonderful effects might have been produced by weak performers on imperfect instruments: but this would not have happened a thousand years afterwards, when a total change had taken place in their physics, as well as morals.

From these considerations we may and should necessarily admit the marvellous power of Greek music in barbarous times, although the same thing cannot take place in an enlightened age, when new imperfections are discovered daily in the system of harmony.

As the Greeks improved in music, its prodigies grew weaker; and when greatly advanced in the art, they acknowledged candidly that their best musicians were not comparable to Orpheus and Amphion. For these two celebrated men, as well as the bagpipe player in the south sea, knew how to ravish the minds of savages, or to conduct them at will, like the adventurer in America.

Contentions at length rose so high among the Greeks concerning the superiority of ancient and

and modern music, that they divided themselves into two violent factions, where invectives were more employed than demonstrations.

Pherecrates, who was a poet of old comedy, and a declared enemy of the modern system, introduced ancient music on the theatre of Athens, in the form of a weeping female, covered with blood, and sinking beneath her wounds. In a lamentable tone of voice she complained of the audacity of innovators, whose cruel treatment had scarcely left her force sufficient to implore the compassion of the audience. Thus, according to Pherecrates, harmony had declined altogether; neither did any hope remain that it could ever be revived.

Plutarch, who likewise had joined the ancient party, speaks most injuriously of the music of his time; and pretends, that it no longer operated so wonderfully as in former days.* But if Plutarch had been a better observer, he would not have required from his cotemporaries a repetition of such miracles as were performed at the building of Thebes, or during the expedition of the Argonauts When the organs of men are changed, it is ridiculous to expect any longer the same sensations.

It must not be imagined, that the glory of excelling in music extended to all the Greeks indiscriminately. That faculty was confined to

* Plutarch, *Treatise on Music*

the Arcadians and Bæotians, the former as singers, and the latter as players on the flute. Nothing is more remarkable, than that these two nations were the most clownish and dull of all the inhabitants of Greece.*

In a digression on Arcadia, to be introduced hereafter, we will examine from what causes the shepherds of that country had acquired more force in their vocal fibres than the other Greeks. No philosopher, however, at this day, could divine to what circumstances the superiority of the Bæotians was attributed, unless previously informed of their local situation. That region, seldom without fogs or clouds, is known to have been nothing more than a deep valley, where the torrents descending from the neighbouring mountains, formed marshes and lakes, which could not be drained, because they were below the level of the Mediterranean. From the canes and reeds produced amidst this humidity, many instruments were formed; and the softness of their tones, according to the Greeks, surpassed every thing on earth. But even from the very marvellous nature of their accounts, we venture to deduce arguments to prove the contrary; because the makers of instruments, by the laws of their art, cannot explain the thousandth part of the exaggerations hazarded by the ancients con-

* Maximus of Tyre, *Dissert.* XXII. and Polyænus, *Stratagem*, lib. I.

cerning the reeds of Orchomenes and of the Cephisus.* In such cases, every thing that cannot be accounted for, according to known rules and principles, should be excluded from the class of positive facts.

When the successive progress of civilization produced considerable changes in the Grecian system of harmony, a great revolution took place likewise in the received ideas respecting the reeds of Bæotia. Theophrastus asserts, that the ancient musicians always made their provision in autumn. This was denied by others who insisted that, to obtain tones truly melodious, the collection should take place in spring, before the texture of the plant had lost its sonorousness by the effects of vegetation. Modern artists employ this substance for mouth pieces alone, and they have observed very exactly, that all the operations of the Greeks, in such matters, must have resulted from false theory and very confined practice.

Whatever were the imperfections of the Bæotian flute, it was notwithstanding better adapted to support and animate the song, than the lyre or cithern, covered with tortoise-shell. This is ascertained at present, not from any train of vague conjectures, but by the testimony of the ancients themselves, and in a manner so very

* Theophrastus, *Hist. Plant.* lib. IV. Pliny, *H. N.* lib. XVI.

positive

positive, that it does not admit of the smallest misinterpretation.

The Greeks, says Aristotle, commit so many faults in singing, that it is much more agreeable to hear them accompanied with the flute, than with the lyre; because the first of these instruments, continues he, conceals the imperfections of the voice, while the other makes them still more perceptible.*

Yet the custom of singing with the lyre continued for many ages, until the impropriety of such accompaniments was demonstrated by philosophers, who founded their opinion on evident reasons, deduced from the construction of the organs of the human body.

If Plato persisted in banishing the Bæotian flute from his republic, and preferred the lyre or cithern for schools of music,† it proceeded from his having studied more the laws of policy, than of harmony. He was afraid of contradicting the decree, by which the Athenians had prohibited all kinds of wind instruments in public education; because, as we have already observed, they changed the lineaments of the countenance, and were injurious besides to the organs of respiration.‡ The Theban flute however was an instrument much easier to be managed than the cithern,

* Aristotle, PROBLEMS. Sect. XIX.

† *On the Republic*, lib. III.

‡ See the article on *Education* in the first Vol.

thern; for the latter required an apprenticeship of three years, at an age too, when time was most precious. It has since been observed, that music disconcerts the imagination of those, who apply themselves to the study of sublime sciences. The memory, occupied in retaining tones and airs, frequently suffers ideas to escape; and in proportion as the fingers of men grow sonorous, said a philosopher of antiquity, their understandings grow mute. Another objection made by Aristotle to the Grecian music, was deduced from the impossibility of understanding distinctly what was sung.* To enjoy therefore the tragedies of Sophocles or Euripides, which were really operas, it was necessary to commit them to memory. Indeed the Athenians knew so many scenes of these pieces by heart, that, when prisoners in Sicily, their chief amusement consisted in singing the finest passages of the Oedipus, the Antigone, and other dramas of the same kind. But this imperfection of the Greek music is common to every species of singing, where words become necessarily less intelligible, than when articulated in common conversation. Whence it follows, that vocal music is precisely in its lowest state, when not a syllable of a cantata can be understood, although composed expressly for a lyric tragedy.

Many critics have observed, that the Greeks

* Problems. Sect. XIX

possessed

possessed little exactness of ear in poetical harmony; and their versifiers violated every rule to this effect, by continuing heroic verses to a great length, without any stops. We find even the Odyssey introduced with this defect, while the very beginning of the Iliad discovers an inaccuracy, with respect to the exact number of feet, which constitutes what is called, a hypermeter.

Rhyming poetry, an invention of a barbarous age, and worthy of barbarians, is not concerned in these observations. Our object here is true poetry, in which all harsh terminations should be avoided; such as words of four syllables at the end of hexameter verse, and of three syllables when it is pentameter. Virgil and Ovid excluded every thing of the kind, through fear of destroying modulation as well as cadence; but the Greeks employed them always without scruple. It would be superfluous to enter into any discussions on this point; for all the Greek poets, from Homer down to Dionysius Periegetes, and from Tyrteus to Callimachus, tend to prove that their best versifiers have always employed in elegies, as well as in epic poems, those rude terminations and cacophonies so much condemned by the Latins.

It is therefore natural to suppose, that some difference existed in the organs of these two nations, which rendered the one more rigorous than the other in poetic harmony. Yet with re-

spect

spect to genius, invention, images, and colouring, the Greeks had a decided superiority over the Romans. Virgil alone has surpassed his model; for his Georgics, although partly imitations of Hesiod, are as much superior to the verses of that poet, as the Helicon rises above the plains of Bœotia. One thing alone in the original has not been copied to advantage: those moral sentences should have been entirely preserved, which the poet of Ascra had so wonderfully adapted to the instruction of peasants. It is not enough to inform them how to till the earth, but they should likewise be taught to preserve that innocence which confers so many charms on rural manners.

VII.—ON ARCADIA.

Some particular observations are to be introduced here on the Arcadians, who alone, among the Greeks, had the reputation of excelling in vocal music.

They inhabited a very rugged country, consisting entirely of mountains crowned with forests of pines, where wild boars, wolves and bears of extraordinary fierceness had their haunts. Some of these eminences afforded points of view, little inferior to the charming landscapes of Attica. Pausanias says, that from the summit of mount Lycæus, he could discover not only Lacedæmon, Corinth, and Argos, but almost every

every town of Peloponnesus, between the thirty seventh and thirty eighth degree of North latitude.

In such a country, agriculture could only be practicable in the bottom of some particular valleys, along the Ladon or the Alpheus; and thus the inhabitants in general were compelled to adopt a pastoral life. Occupations of that nature absorbed all the ideas of the shepherds, who had no other amusement than singing, while they tended their flocks; but the place, most celebrated for song, was round mount Mænalus, which resounded continually with rustic strains.

As the Arcadians were generally exposed to the open air in a very rigorous climate, their organs, by an effect well known at this day, had aquired more force than those of the other Greeks, whose manner of life was softer and more sedentary in the bosom of cities. Neither capital nor metropolis existed in Arcadia, and the greater part of its towns scarcely equalled our villages; while, far from frequented roads, or buried among the mountains, they had little communication with the rest of Greece. All the rivers, except the mouths of the Alpheus and Nedas, were only torrents unfit for navigation; and the inequality of the surface there, rendered all kinds of carriages useless. On this account the wares imported by merchants of the island of Egina, were carried on mules from the port of

Cyllene in Elis, to the foot of the high mountains, where a truck was established for wool, and other productions of pastoral economy.*

In these little towns of Arcadia, such arts as architecture, painting, and sculpture, were never practised. All their temples, as well as statues, were the workmanship of strangers, the greater part of whom belonged to the school of Athens; and philosophy was as little known there as the sciences. Provided a true Arcadian understands music, says Polybius, he does not blush to be ignorant of every thing besides; and Ephorus, continues he, did not act wisely in speaking of this study with disdain, or treating it as illusive or dangerous; for ever since the inhabitants of Cynæthium have ceased to sing, they are degenerated into the most perverse of mankind.

Polybius, when supporting in this manner, the speculative principles of Pythagoras and Plato, did not know that they would one day be refuted by invincible arguments. If the inhabitants of Cynæthium became necessarily corrupt, because they neglected music, of course that cause, which operated so forcibly on their moral character, should have produced similar

* Pausanias, in the *Arcad.* This commerce of Elis was carried on even previous to the Olympiads. The position of the Arcadians, in the centre of Peloponnesus, rendered them absolutely dependant on the Elians.

effects

effects on every other people in the same situation. His assertion, evidently, had no foundation in truth; and its absurdity, like the philosophy of Pythagoras and Plato in general, was occasioned by erroneous principles. Many nations, without ever having attached themselves to music, were beyond comparison less depraved than the Greeks, and infinitely their superiors in sincerity.

The small town of Cynæthium was situated in the most northern part of Arcadia, at the bottom of a narrow vale, formed by two arms of mount Erymanthus; and from being entirely exposed to the north wind, it must have experienced more cold than the rest of Peloponnesus. Not far distant stood an ancient temple of Diana, which according to Polybius himself, enjoyed the right of asylum;* and to this alone should be attributed the depravity of the Cynæthians. Murderers, robbers, and malefactors of every denomination, fled thither from the police of their different countries, in the same manner that the scum of Athens took refuge in Megara, where morals were likewise perverted by a multitude of men, who brought with them not only dangerous maxims, but a consummate experience in crimes.

* Polybius, *Hist.* lib. IV. This temple of Arcadia, one of the great asylums of Greece, was forty stadia distant from Cynæthium, on the road which led to Clitor.

It is doubtless more natural to attribute the perversity of these people to such palpable causes, than to their indifference for Arcadian music, which was confined to pastoral songs, accompanied with the flute of seven pipes, or the cithern. The latter instrument was said to have been invented in the mountains of Arcadia;* and that opinion seemed the more founded as tortoises were found in no other province of European Greece. By adding the shell of this animal to the foot of the simple lyre, it was changed to the cithern, the power and effects of which can be calculated at this day according to possitive notions of acoustics. What renders our cord-instruments so sonorous, is the combination of beach-wood with pine, for the longitudinal fibres of the latter are in reality so many nerves susceptible of vibration. But as the shells of the tortoises, found on the mounts Cyllene and Lycæus, did not partake so strongly of such qualities, the cithern of the Greeks must have produced a weaker sound than the most imperfect of our violins.

Whatever may have been the qualities of the instruments used by the Arcadians for accompaniments, their manners were less affected by music than by the policy of Epaminondas, who, after the battle of Leuctra, forced them to build a

* *Hymn in honor of Mercury commonly attributed to Homer.* The primitive cithern, is here meant, with seven strings inserted in a corslet of Arcadian tortoise-shell.

metropolis

metropolis. When accustomed, in this manner, to live in society, civilization made a progress which could never have taken place among men scattered on the mountains, where all communication with each other was frequently interrupted by prodigious quantities of snow.

Habitations, dispersed in such a manner, admitted of no defence against the Lacedæmonians, who pillaged repeatedly all the cantons of Arcadia; and when the shepherds had lost their flocks, no other resource remained but that of serving as mercenaries in all the armies of Greece.

The Arcadians were then what the Swiss have been in latter times: they took a part in all wars, and fought so readily in the quarrels of others, that they were considered as military machines more than as soldiers. Nations, employed in agriculture, obtained anciently the reputation of being very warlike; but shepherds were still more so than they.

VIII.—ON THE MODE OF EMPLOYING MUSIC IN TRAGEDIES, AND THE DEFECTIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE GREEK THEATRES.

This digression diminishes our enthusiasm respecting Acadia, and leads to a circumstance, which would never have been known, unless noticed

ticed by Polybius. From him we learn, that Ephorus, who was the greatest historian and most judicious critic of Greece, entertained ideas very little favorable to the music of his country. In reality, the unnatural manner of conducting tragedies in those days, rendered them liable to all the objections, since alledged against operas.

Unfortunate heroes, singing their calamities in Iambic verse, to the sound of a flute, do not appear to be proper persons for inspiring pity, and much less the *phoberon*, or terror.

Thus the means employed to produce a pleasing effect were exactly in opposition to that purpose. But as the moderns persist in preserving operas with all their inevitable absurdities, so the Greeks would not renounce the Melopoeia, or music in tragedies, where even dances were introduced at times, and gaiety was promoted at the expence of propriety.

Instruments so little sonorous as the lyre and cithern, could never be employed in theatrical music; and besides, they were not at all calculated to accompany the singing of the choir. Both tragedy and comedy were therefore confined to the Theban flute, although it was adapted only to very small theatres. When edifices were so vast as to contain a whole nation, the flutes required to be raised and augmented in size, until, as Horace says,

they

they degenerated into trumpets, and lost the softness of their tone.* As the Melopoeia, even after this change, could not be heard distinctly in every part of the theatre, means were contrived to repercuss the sound by certain artificial echos, highly injurious both to cadence and measure. It is demonstrated, that machines of this nature, placed at unequal distances, could not have resounded exactly together, and must necessarily have produced some degree of cacophany.

That the Greeks were not disgusted with this dissonance is very astonishing; although it was one of the smallest inconveniences of open theatres, totally defective in their construction, and adapted more to the climate of Asia than of Greece. In summer the heat was often insupportable; and a shower of rain, or a storm of wind, interrupted, unavoidably, the representations, even when most animated and interesting.†

Spon, the traveller, fancied he had a right as a physician to criticise the position of the ancient theatre of Athens. Instead of placing it in the south of the citadel, says he, the Athenians should have preferred the north, to avoid being incommoded by the rays of the sun. But then

* *Art of Poetry.*

† Apulæus, Florid. II. The Greeks were ignorant of those curtains used at Rome to screen the theatres from the rays of the sun.

they would have been exposed to that wind, called Sciron, of which the traveller Spon had no idea, while its pernicious effects were but too well known to the Athenians.

Nothing more fatal could happen to poets, who contended for the prize in tragedy, than a sudden shower: then the spectators fled; the actors abandoned the scene; and even the judges retired, leaving the combat for glory to be decided on a more serene day. The moments there became consequently very precious; and to prevent them as much as possible from being misemployed, both actors and poets, like the orators, were compelled by the fatal law of the clepsydra to end their pieces one way or another, in a time regulated by water clocks.* On this account, the heroes of Sophocles and Euripides took up less time in talking than those of Homer, who, in their very combats, carried on such conversation as common men would never introduce, unless to pass an idle hour in the midst of peace.

Aristotle says, that an hundred new tragedies were sometimes judged at Athens in the course of very few days. This must have happened, whenever the number of contending poets amounted to five and twenty; for each had to present one satire and three tragic dramas, which contained at least five thousand verses. From

* Aristotle, *Poetic.*

such

such examples we can form some opinion how much these men were subject to musolepsy.

Having already spoken so freely against the judges of the Athenian theatre, we may be allow to hazard one word in their excuse. It might really happen, that an author, after having produced two very trifling tragedies, had yet succeeded so far in the third, as to unite an interesting situation with such happy verses, that the minds of the judges were struck, and they pardoned many faults in favor of great beauties.

Some pretend, that this tribunal should have been suppressed in the ninety-first Olympiad, when its injustice became memorable by crowning Xenocles in preference to Euripides. But they do not reflect, that as long as theatrical and poetical struggles continued in vogue, it was necessary that sentences should be pronounced, victors declared, and palms distributed; all which could be effected only by a particular tribunal.

The theatre of Athens, in the opinion of Dicearchus, surpassed all others then extant, as well in size, as machinery and decorations;* and this may well be supposed; for it is known that the Athenians were more passionate after theatrical representations than the other Greeks.

Tragedy and comedy seemed to be indigenous plants of Attica, where, like the olive and myrtle,

* Dicearchus, in the fragment ΒΙΟΣ 'ΕΛΛΑΔΟΣ.

they attained the highest perfection. All those who felt any divine inspiration or talent for poetry, consecrated themselves to the theatre, and were sure of meeting with success. This was the element, and the glory of the Athenians; but it prevented their success as epic or lyric poets; for they permitted the palm to be ravished from their hands; and the crown became the prize of nations infinitely their inferiors in the study of the sciences.

IX.—PHILOSOPHICAL SECTS, AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE GRAMMARIANS ON GRECIAN LITERATURE.

It appears very probable that the five sects established in Attica, had an affinity more or less direct with the different temperaments of man; and thus the choice of sectators often depended on physical influence, or a peculiar disposition of their organs. Nothing appears more natural than that those men, who were born with great force of mind and strong nerves, should discover a predilection for stoicism; while mortals, endowed by nature with more delicacy of fibres and keener sensibility, fled for refuge to the myrtles of Epicurus.

The Greeks were often hurried by a violent impulse of the moment into actions the most unaccountable, and least likely to take place.

Cicero

Cicero relates, that in the early part of the day, the inhabitants of Athens went to saunter under the plane-trees of the academy: Polemon came there, like the rest, accompanied with his mistress, and a very gaudy retinue; but all at once he tore the crown of violets from his brow, threw himself into a school of philosophy, and on that same evening became very different from what he had been in the morning.

People, whose temperaments partook of no extremes, were always inclined either for the Lycæum or the Academy. Such as possessed soli- of understanding ranged themselves with Aristotle; and those who had only genius, or even pretensions to that endowment, went to augment the crowd of Platonists.

With regard to individuals of melancholic dispositions, and characters incapable of submitting to the yoke of laws, or the burden of any system, they fell one and all into the arms of the Cynics. Enjoying there as much freedom as could be found even in savage life, without either toiling at trades, or laboring the ground, they lived on the harvest of others. Yet the Greeks contributed willingly to the maintenance of the Cynics, who were a class of men not altogether misplaced in a republican state. Perhaps, indeed, we ought to consider them as a secret spring of the Athenian government; for they alone dared to utter great truths to danger-

 ous

ous citizens; and even tyrants dreaded nothing more than the voice of inexorable censurers, who had nothing to lose. The police was not desirous of taking men into custody, who could never pay costs, and when set at liberty, became always more daring than before. Among their greatest exploits may be considered that of venturing to Rome, to upbraid Nero with his crimes. They frequently paid the same compliment to Domitian; and when such enterprises proved fatal, they were regarded as martyrs; but if fortunate enough to return to Greece, their heroism was rewarded with unbounded applause.

Crates knocked at every door; had all houses open to him; assumed the right of judging domestic disputes; condemned husbands; reprimanded wives; and endeavoured as much as possible to maintain the peace of families. No person surely would deny that such a man deserved to dine at the expence of his fellow citizens.

Very erroneous ideas are entertained in the northern countries of Europe, relative to the life of the ancient Cynics, whose disagreements were much fewer than have been generally supposed. Diogenes, in summer, wandered through the gayest valleys of Attica, and lived on the herbs and fruits he received from the Athenians; but when the cold winds began to blow from the snowy mountains of Diacri, he retired

tired to the isthmus of Corinth, to enjoy a milder climate. Among the beggars of Naples, some might be found at this day who would refuse to exercise vice-royalty in Norway, or to govern Siberia with the consent of the court of Petersburg. So much do they consider a serene sky and a temperate region as necessary to felicity, that nakedness is often an enjoyment, and a repast of fruits voluptuousness.

It is said that the Cynics of Greece practised at times a species of policy very extraordinary in its nature. When speaking publicly at Athens or Corinth against the corruption of morals, they frequently entered into such vehement declamations against the courtesans, that the greatest beauties were forced to appease those ferocious animals with caresses. In this manner Diogenes was said to have obtained an introduction to the appartment of Lais, where, most probably, no other person ever passed a night and paid nothing. Crates had likewise many disputes with women of that class; but he did not allow himself to be so easily disarmed as the vulgar Cynics, who affixed no importance whatever to the metaphysical speculations of the other sects, but endeavoured frequently to ridicule them with jests fully as coarse as those of Lucian.

The hardiness is really astonishing with which the Greeks formed hypothetical systems, relative to the laws of the universe, at a time when

they were unacquainted even with the true motion of the planets. Newton himself did not know their exact number; and by commenting the Apocalypse, he fancied to have discovered, that they should necessarily consist of seven. One century however did not pass until the eighth was ascertained, and many more probably exist, although invisible to our eyes from their great distance. Neither can the diurnal rotation of our globe be explained after the principles of Newtonians. It is demonstrated, that this motion does not depend on any attractive cause whatever; otherwise that of the moon would be in some measure analogous with our own, and even children know that this is not the case with any of the satellites.

Of all the methods adopted in the schools of Athens, that of the Platonists was least favorable to the progress of sound philosophy. They neglected entirely observations, experiments, and natural history, for abstruse speculations, which, carried beyond the limits of human understanding, must necessarily end in such absurd chimeras as the Theurgy of Iamblicus, Plotinus, and Porphyry, the three greatest visionaries that ever appeared on earth. From their ashes have sprung up, in the eighteenth century, the illuminated, the mystics, physiognomists, adepts, jugglers, sorcerers, and all that can be imagined

imagined either infamous or dangerous among civilized nations.*

This fault of the successors of Plato was likewise common to the Epicureans, who were accused of being very unenlightened in natural philosophy. It is surprising how it could have escaped the observation of Epicurus, that his system would have subsisted better without the physical part, in which it was most vulnerable. All his adversaries directed their attacks on that side; and finding little difficulty in demolishing such an edifice, they did not allow any traces of it to remain. Epicurus would have avoided many disputes, had he declared, that the great object of his doctrine was to draw mankind from the darkness of superstition, and to establish peace and harmony, without attempting to explain the formation of the universe. The solution of such problems is beyond the power of our organs; and were our researches there successful, they could neither promote the individual happiness of any man, nor the public felicity of nations; for the world must still have to suffer from wars, taxes, despots, fanatics, and intolerant theologists.

Epicurism did not require any support from its

* Some countries of Europe appear really in danger of falling not only into the absurdities of Theurgy, but into a state of complete imbecillity. Never were jugglers more destitute of cunning than now; and yet, at no time was the number of dupes so considerable.

physical

physical systems, which were either false or monstrous; and when Gassendi endeavoured to defend them, that great man lost many precious moments, which he might have employed with more utility both to himself and posterity.

It was a reproach generally made to the Epicureans of Athens, that they wrote in prose, with as much harshness and sterility as the stoics, who excused themselves from the nature of their principles, which aimed, said they, at rendering mankind virtuous and not elegant. This could not be alledged by the Epicureans; for it was with them, if any where, that the graces should have been cultivated: yet Cicero declares, that their books were too badly written to be much read. The disciples even scrupled to surpass the style of their master; neither would they change his obscure phrases, nor correct any improper word he had employed.

That Epicurus should have conceived an utter aversion for the literature of the Greek grammarians, appears very natural. In his opinion, they were too much taken up with mythology not to inspire their pupils with credulity. An attachment to every thing marvellous was known to degenerate readily into superstition, which the Epicureans constantly opposed as the most dangerous of monsters; and thus they surpassed every other sect in rendering service to mankind.

The

The grammarians, in turn, accused the Epicureans of being such inanimate and lazy mortals, that they would not take the trouble of learning to speak; and they compared the language of Epicurus to the ill-articulated sounds of a stammering child.*

In this conflict of opinions, both parties certainly carried their objections to extremes. We have already noticed the improper manner in which the grammarians employed the poems of Homer; but they afterwards introduced another plan, which proved fatal to the literature of Greece.

Aristophanes of Byzantium, and Aristarchus of Alexandria, two grammarians, unfortunately very powerful with their sect, and but too famous in the world, conceived the project of selecting some privileged authors for the use of the schools, and of exploding all others. No sooner had they adopted this idea, than as gods of taste, and dispensors of genius, they began in the most arbitrary manner to form a catalogue of classical works. It was chiefly in this rash undertaking that the ancient jealousy of the grammarians discovered itself, by the total exclusion of the philosophers from this selection. The best productions of Aristotle and Theophrastus

* Cicero, in speaking of this philosopher, calls him *Epicurum de natura deorum balbutientem*; not meaning the weakness of his arguments, but the badness of his style.

phrastus could not obtain favor with their critics, who admitted into their sanctuary only five epic poets, nine lyric, five tragic, four elegiac, three iambic, six of the ancient comic, two of the middle age, and five of the modern comic poets. To these were added seven historians and ten orators, amongst whom even Dinarchus had a place: he was known to the Athenians by the appellation of the mule, who had eaten the barley of Diogenes.

It requires only a rapid glance on this classical canon, to be convinced that the Greek grammarians were far more inclined to poetry than to prose. Yet this new plan of study acquired such a sanction, that the writers, who were admitted there, received the title of *judged authors*,* because they had been approved by the tribunal of criticism; but the supposed culprits, who could not succeed, were infinitely more numerous.

Inexpressible evils arose from this innovation: it changed, without necessity, the system of studies; prescribed rules where none were required; contracted the sphere of human knowledge; and occasioned the loss of many useful works. When no longer employed in the schools, they ceased to be an object for booksellers, and could with difficulty be procured any where.†

* Suidas, at the word ΔΕΙΝΑΡΧΟΣ; and Photius, *Cod.* LXI.

† Rhunkenius, *on the Orators of Greece.*

Those

Those extracts, in form of journals, which are said to have been invented by Photius, belong probably to more ancient times. We may suppose that people contented themselves with reading a simple analysis of such authors as were most difficult to be found, after the impudence of the grammarians had excluded them from their encyclopedia of education.

It was at this epoch that the genius of the Greeks, checked in its progress, began to decline; and although some glimmerings were seen in the days of the Ptolemies, yet the flame had then diminished very considerably.*

The too violent impulse communicated by Aristarchus and other critics of Alexandria to their scholars, in directing them to an extravagant and ridiculous study of poesy, made the number of versifiers prodigious. Yet of so many poets only seven or eight acquired any degree of reputation; and some of these very undeservedly; such as Callimachus, who was absolutely destitute of genius. All the rest descended into that eternal darkness, the veil of which began to spread itself on the horizon of Greece, when that country, conquered by the Romans, was subjugated likewise by a new religion. What the Greeks esteemed sacred formerly, they now considered as profane: every thing great became small; and all knowledge was re-

* Heyne on *the genius of the Ptolemean age.*

duced

duced with them to violent debates on incomprehensible points of theology. As they were inexhaustible in metaphysical subtilties, many thousands of weapons could always be found either to attack or defend an opinion: each day produced something new, which did not fail to be called a heresy: disputes took place at first on a word, and then on a syllable. When incapable of understanding each other, they had recourse to excommunication; and all the ancient prodigies of mythology were travestied into modern miracles, to prove in the morning what had been dreamed during the night.

Amidst such confusion, the arts of war and of peace were forgotten. While the Arians and their antagonists disputed at Athens, with as much vehemence as if the fate of the universe depended on their opinions, Alaric, with an army of Goths, took possession of the capital of Attica. Then these sectaries, so intrepid in appearance, had not the courage to shed one drop of blood in defence of their country; and Alaric entered Athens, as a weary traveller repairs to an inn for repose. None were allowed even to mention, in his presence, any of those ridiculous subjects which the Greeks called heterodoxy: but when he departed, their disputes grew more intemperate than before; and all the laurels of Marathon and Salamis were then changed into briars and thorns. It was in this manner that theological

logical quarrels, which are the true symptoms of an ignorant age, were fatal to the Greeks; and every nation, absurd enough to follow their example, must experience a similar destiny.

We have hitherto only considered the Athenians in private life, amidst their tribunals, manufactures, and rural habitations; but to finish this historical picture, it will be necessary to examine likewise their public character. As a civil power, we find Athens counterbalancing Lacedæmon, and contributing more to the consequence of Greece than could have been expected from twenty such small republics.

END OF THE SEVENTH SECTION.

SECT. VIII.

GOVERNMENT AND RELIGION OF THE ATHENIANS.

I.—POLITICAL CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC.

To determine under what form of government man has performed the greatest things, is of all researches the most important.

Yet this question is not more interesting than easy to be solved; since Athens and Rome, the two towns of the known world most illustrious in this point, were both the one and the other democratical or popular states. The art of war, institutions of peace, agriculture, rural economy, navigation, commerce, and manufactures, received there from the genius of man the highest degree of perfection, of which they were then susceptible.

The Athenians are generally accused of having been too warlike; yet their bravery alone prevented Greece from falling under the yoke of the Persians, or of the Lacedæmonians, who would have involved the whole country in desolation and darkness. Such was the spirit of a government destructive of all science; and so ferocious

ferocious were the minds of men, who could neither be softened by grandeur, nor changed by adversity.

Whenever a power, purely military, was established in the midst of Greece, it was easy to predict that the calm would be of short duration, and that dreadful tempests must ensue. Lacedæmon, says Aristotle, languished in peace, and revived in war; until at length the state was devoured by this thirst of blood, as a volcano is consumed by its own fires.

It has been said, that the Athenians possessed eighty six square leagues of a very ungrateful soil, while the territory of the Spartans consisted of two hundred and fifty square leagues. Athens must therefore have made prodigious efforts, to counterbalance, with so small means, the extraordinary resources of a rival power.

The general confederation of Greece was so defective, that it neither sufficed to preserve any equilibrium among the independent states, nor to terminate wars by negociation. It will appear in the sequel, that from this fault of the federative pact proceeded all the political evils of that country. But the source of discord existed at Lacedæmon, as we have already observed; and there originated the ruin of so many republics, which, like ships in a tempest, dashed each other to pieces.

It will presently appear even to demonstration, that none but false ideas have hitherto been received

ceived relative to the Lacedæmonians; for never did any people exist on the ancient continent more avaricious, sordid or unjust: and they were infinitely less formidable from their bravery than their perfidy.

The Athenians were sometimes constrained to purchase peace from such enemies at a very high price; and Pericles, while charged with the administration of the finances, rendered his accounts in the following terms: "O men of Athens," said he, "the public revenues are expended; but never shall I dare to inform you how, nor for what purpose".

On this the people answered, it was not their intention such a mystery should be revealed: we approve, added they, without any farther examination, all that your prudence has dictated in this matter.

The Athenians, who pretended to be so ignorant concerning the employ of their money, were all aware, that it had been sent, in a secret manner, to Lacedæmon to bribe the kings, senators, and Ephori.* While lulling them in this manner, Pericles made great preparations. He foresaw that peace could not always be purchased on the same conditions, and that open war would be unavoidable with a state implacable towards all those who refused to be its subjects, or tributaries.

* Scholiast of Aristophanes, on the comedy of the *Clouds*; and Plutarch's *life of Pericles*.

It is commonly said, that the republic of Venice has been produced by chance, without either plan, system, or any legislator, who ever dared to speak against the nobility in favor of the people. The republic of Athens, on the contrary, was formed with reflexion; for whenever any thing appeared defective, it failed not to be corrected; and even that law was changed, by which Solon had excluded the lowest class of citizens from the magistracy.

Aristotle is deceived when he pretends, in his political works, that this legislator established a perfect democracy at Athens. Modern authors have repeated the same error, without perceiving that Solon had formed in reality a mixed constitution, where the popular interest was strongly chained down by aristocracy.

Whenever a man of probity, acknowleged as a citizen, can be excluded from the magistracy under pretence of indigence, we may be assured that democracy is there very imperfect: and dreadful inconveniences must result from such principles. Athens would have suffered greatly by being deprived of the abilities of many illustrious citizens, had poverty removed them from the government. There, as in other places, the rich possessed less sagacity than the poor, whose necessities served to sharpen a weapon, which soon grows blunt in the bosom of abundance.

It was after the battle of Platææ, about the year four hundred and seventy-eight before our Era, that this law of Solon was repealed, and the right of magistracy of every kind extended to all citizens of whatever class, without any regard to their fortune, or birth; and then the lowest of the Athenians became a king.

This new form of government, sanctioned by a solemn law,* was very unpleasing to the nobles; but they were forced to satisfy a people flushed with glory, who, after having triumphed over the Persians, would certainly have abolished nobility in Attica, had the establishment of a popular government been opposed. Thus a complete revolution was effected without any noise, nor did a single drop of blood on this occasion stain the scene of debate.

To this epoch we must trace the true cause of the grandeur of the Athenians. Many suppose that a degeneracy has since succeeded gradually in the moral character of most European nations, until reduced to the condition of Asiatics, they are now no longer capable of supporting the weight of a republican government.

Rousseau, the most inconsistent of all reason-

* Here are the expressions of that famous law which, established real democracy at Athens, and complete political equality among the citizens. ΚΟΙΝΗΝ 'ΕΙΝΑΙ ΤΗΝ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑΝ, ΤΟΥΣ 'ΑΡΧΟΝΤΑΣ 'ΕΞ ΑΘΗΝΑΙΩΝ ΠΑΝΤΩΝ 'ΑΙΡΕΙΣΘΑΙ. Plutarch's *Life of Aristides*.

ers, has asserted, that the gods alone are capable of living in a pure democracy; but when asked to define the nature of his divinities, he knew not what to answer. When a man puts himself in a situation of being silenced by a single question, his opinions in all such matters should go for nothing.

Independent of this change in the moral characters of men, enervated by luxury, and accustomed for many ages to the yoke of an individual, it is easy to observe, that the whole of Europe has been conquered by German nations, who were notoriously averse to republican gosment. Each horde had a king; some had even more than one; and every conquered state became a monarchy.

The troubles and intrigues, occasioned at Rome by the election of consuls, are well known; and every year was introduced there with renewed scenes of corruption. But at Athens, on the contrary, where the nine archons were chosen by lot, every thing was conducted without confusion; and the history of the republic contains no example of any tumult on such occasions.

Intrigues were prevented by this mode of nomination: it rendered corruption impotent; equalized the hopes of all candidates; and consoled the unsuccessful. Every citizens could aspire to such magistracies, and an absolute exclusion was only given to those who were either

under

under age, noted for infamy, or oppressed with infirmities.*

As the charge of archon at Athens was purely honorable, and did not extend to the command of the army, no inconvenience could arise from appointing such magistrates by lot. The same mode was followed in creating the senate, which likewise had no power of executing any thing, unless it had been examined and approved by the nation: without this sanction, their decrees could have no more force than the pretended laws composed by Plato for the inhabitants of his republic.

Never was Montesquieu more unfortunate than when he undertook to speak of the Greeks: unacquainted with their language, he depended on faithless interpreters, and proceeded without having any notion whatever of the republic of Athens. Among other things he pretends, that the senate was formed anew every three months;† and surely no greater error, than this, could be adopted by a political writer.

* Lysias ΠΕΡΙ ἈΔΥΝΑΤΟΥ.

In the time of Solon the magistrates of Athens were chosen by suffrages alone; but after the new law, already cited, they were appointed by lot: this at least was the mode pursued with the nine Archons.

† *Esprit des Lois*. lib. V. By consulting Sigonius and Ubbo Emmius on the republic of Athens, many details will be found, which we pass over here in silence.

As the inhabitants of Attica, ever since the time of Solon, had been divided into ten tribes, they furnished every year fifty men, determined by lot, who formed the senate of five hundred: and each tribe presided during an artificial month of thirty-five or thirty-six days, to complete a luni-solar year, astronomically defective.

The republic gave a dinner every day to fifty of those senators, who were called Prytanes: Rome, on the contrary, had no public table for any magistrate; and thus one spring at least was wanting there, which served in Greece to elevate the minds of citizens. Whenever an Athenian had distinguished himself by his patriotism, either in war, or peace, he was entitled ever afterwards to a place at the table of the senators; and no distinction was more esteemed, except that of being represented in embroidery on the veil of Minerva. This manner of recompensing illustrious men was little expensive to the Athenians; for their meals discovered no less frugality, than the suppers of Socrates. The republic watched so carefully over this important institution, that even the appearance of luxury could never get footing there; while at Lacedæmon, as will be seen presently, the public repasts degenerated into sumptuous feasts.

The goverment of Athens had the fault of being liable to fits of *Laocracy*, the great disease of popular constitutions. The lower class of

men

men in the capital, acquired, at times, too great ascendancy in the deliberation of the state, from the negligence of those, who, attached entirely to their country seats, did not attend regularly the assemblies of the nation. Many had some leagues to travel in repairing thither, while the mariners of Piræus, and the artists of Athens, were ready to take every advantage, in the absence of the cultivators and inhabitants of the cantons.*

The republic endeavoured to remedy this inconvenience, by allowing some indemnification for expences to all those who frequented the assemblies; but that sum, called *ecclesiastic money*, was too trifling to induce those, who were on the frontiers, to a constant attendance. Rome experienced an incoveniency of the same nature; for the impossibility of arriving in one day at the field of Mars, where the comitia were held, often prevented the members of the rustic tribes from undertaking such journies.

Nothing could correct that species of laocracy, but a representation of all the different cantons of Attica, by deputies, who should have resided constantly at Athens, invested with full powers by their constituents. But this arrangement was impracticable there, because of the nobility, who would never have agreed with the plebeians on the nature of such an investiture. We have only to observe what passes in all national diets and

* Aristhophanes, in the ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΖ.

assemblies, to be convinced that the nobles always consult their own interests more than those of the people.

The nine annual archons had so little influence at Athens, that the direction of great affairs devolved on the demagogue, who was neither magistrate, judge, nor dictator, but a simple citizen honored with the confidence of the people. To him they delivered a ring, regarded justly as the great seal of the republic; and this fatal deposit is known to have been in the hands of the famous Cleo during the Peloponnesian war, as we learn from a passage in the *Knights* of Aristophanes.

In fact, the demagogues of Athens were ministers of the finances, and first secretaries of the treasury. It was as such that Pericles disposed of the public money in buildings and negotiations, until he acquired the reputation of the greatest politician in Greece.*

Having studied the principles of war, while commanding successively the fleets and armies of the republic, he adopted finally the system of those writers on tactics, who believed that all battles should be avoided, where chance has an influence beyond the reach of calculation. When

* The demagogues were properly called ΤΑΜΙΑΙ ΤΗΣ ΔΙΟΙΚΗΣΕΩΣ; or, *Treasurers of the Diocese of Athens.* They held their places for five years; and were sometimes continued for fifteen years, as happened to Lycurgus, son of Lycophron.

a na-

a nation, said they, is not desirous of making conquests, it is easy to avoid decisive actions, and stop the progress of an enemy either by strong camps and fortified places, or by harrassing them with cavalry, like those of the Thessalians; and Polybius, among others, regards such measures as irresistible.

This mode of defence, however, can never be combined with a popular government, where citizens are inspired with great audacity; and temerity is often necessary to preserve the state from being continually attacked by neighbouring powers, either for the course of some trifling rivulet, or the passage of a bridge. But as it is in the nature of rashness to be blind, the Athenians, in opposition to all the rules of prudence, dared to carry the war into Sicily, while they were blocked up at home by an army of Spartans.

The Greeks, who could never refrain from introducing extraordinary fables amidst serious matters, pretended, that Nepune, angry with the Athenians, had sworn to inspire them with bad counsels, whenever they deliberated. On this Minerva took an oath no less solemn, that she would make all the bad counsels of Neptune prove successful. Never was this fable more completely contradicted than in the expedition against Sicily, whence neither ship nor man ever returned.

The

The sad necessity of depending on foreign grain, made the Athenians attempt every thing to conquer that island, where vast plains and a rich soil would have assured their continual subsistance. But in proportion to the great importance of the enterprise, it required to be conducted with wisdom, and not according to the impulse of a temerity unexampled among mankind.

One fault in particular was then committed, and has since been repeated an hundred times by different nations. No calculation had been made of the difficulties to be encountered in transporting over sea a body of cavalry sufficient to act against the Sicilians, who had an excellent breed of horses. When Scipio carried the war into Africa, he knew previously, that on landing, he should be supported by the Numidian cavalry of Masinissa. But the Athenians never once reflected on such matters; and, blinded by the empire of the sea, they placed on it alone the most sanguine hopes of success. In reality, no fleet more completely equipped or better exercised than that of the Athenians ever appeared on the Mediterranean: it wanted nothing but to be invincible. Had the conquest of Sicily succeeded, they would next have attempted, says Thucydides, to subdue Africa on one side, and Italy on the other, to render themselves successively masters of all the ancient world. It is difficult

to

to ascertain at the present time, whether this was a secret of state revealed by Thucydides, or only a simple conjecture he had hazarded. However chimerical such a plan might have been considered, yet it was afterwards realized by the Romans, who began by taking possession of Sicily: that island led to the conquest of Africa; and Africa was the key of Asia.

The politicians of antiquity were generally of opinion, that the too great influence of orators in the deliberations of the state, was the greatest defect of the Athenian government. Their language was sometimes compared to the song of the Syrens, and at others, to the noise of thunder. In this manner they subdued the mind, chained the will, and determined the opinions of the multitude, as the loadstone attracts iron. The republic resembled a ship, of which the eloquent demagogues were captains, the senate pilots, and the people sailors.

Yet it would seem that the body politic might have been directed by other springs than those of eloquence. In agitating the question, whether or not war should be declared against Macedonia, the solution of the problem did not require the *Philippics* of Demosthenes, who was forced to acknowledge afterwards, that he had been mistaken in his conjectures.

The cause of our weakness during this war, says he, arises from our deliberating in open air. All

All Greece is informed of whatever we propose either to execute or decline, and nothing remains secret at Athens. The chest of finances, destined for theatrical expences, is always well provided, but the other for military supplies, is as difficult to be filled as the urn of the Danaides. Philip of Macedon, on the contrary, has no other treasurer, general, or counsellor than himself: his artifices are infinite: his celerity beyond belief: he is seen all at once encamped with an army in some place, before even its march is known; and that army is commanded by a man devoured by the most insatiable ambition. Bursting from obscurity by dint of daring every thing, his body is constantly exposed to accidents of all kinds, and they have already torn away some of its members. But mutilated in this manner, he is still seen darting into the flame of combats, and provoking even the god of war in the centre of dangers.*

* ΠΕΡΙ ΣΤΕΦΑΝΟΥ.

Demosthenes exaggerates greatly the backwardness of the Athenians in furnishing money to form the army of the republic: for Philip himself was astonished at the promptitude with which they raised so many troops; and this certainly could not be done without money. Instead of being so very expeditious they would have done better to proceed with more deliberation, and not allow themselves to be carried away by the illusory politics of Demosthenes, who discovered great intrepidity on the rostrum, although it did not surpass his swiftness at the battle of Chæronæa.

It is surprising to hear Demosthenes reciting, after all these events, what he should have said before they took place. The true cause of the ill success of that campaign was the too great ardor of the Athenians in the battle of Chæronæa. Having never engaged the Macedonian infantry by land, and unacquainted with its discipline and armour, they would have acted more prudently by remaining on the brow of mount Parnes, to defend the defiles towards Asopus, where, according to Xenophon, they were almost impenetrable.

Rome was saved by a general, who had the art to avoid a battle; and the Athenians required some such hero, instead of Lysicles, the most ignorant tactician of his age. The farther he penetrated into the plains of Bæotia, the more he augmented the force of the Macedonian phalanx, which was never more formidable than in an open country: while on a broken surface, like the north of Attica, its great evolutions, called in Greek *exeligmes*, became impracticable.

At Athens, the right of making peace or war belonged alone to the people, in a general assembly of the nation. To communicate precise ideas of the great interests of the country to the least informed of the citizens, that part of national policy was reduced to some maxims, so short as well as simple, that a child of ten years could get them by heart, and comprehend their meaning.

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We must never allow the Persians, said they, to make conquests in Europe, the Lacedæmonians to aggrandize themselves, or the Thebans to become too powerful. Our navy must always be maintained on a respectable footing; commerce protected; manufactures encouraged, and above all things the popular government preserved, without which Attica would cease to be a flourishing country. Holland in the same manner must soon become uninhabitable, whenever it has the misfortune to be subjugated.

Macedonia never entered into the head of him who composed these fundamental maxims. Buried in a profound sleep, that country had little appearance, then, of ever being roused into activity. Had any person spoken to Pericles of the future grandeur of Macedonia, he would no more have credited the supposition, than Cardinal Richlieu the present state of Russia. So true it is that revolutions always arrive from a quarter, where they have been least apprehended by those who affect to be politicians.

The general interest of Greece required that Macedonia should be smothered in its cradle; and that must have taken place, had the Lacedæmonians joined their forces to those of the Athenians at the battle of Chæronæa. But never did any people on earth commit a greater or more irreparable fault than the Lacedæmonians on that occasion. They remained quiet spectators, while Philip vanquished the Athenians, without

without perceiving that they were threatened with the same fate: and when desirous of checking the efforts of Macedonia, they received the most memorable defeat that ever happened to any nation. At the battle of Selasia their army was entirely lost, as well as their country and capital, where the Macedonians entered in triumph; while the king of Lacedæmon embarking in a small vessel, and fled to Egypt, never more to return.*

Such were the fatal effects of the insidious policy of the Spartans, who betrayed the Athenians at Chæronæa; and never could they be prevailed on to afford the smallest succour against the common enemy of their country, and the destroyer of liberty.

II. DEFECTS IN THE CONFEDERATION OF THE GREEK STATES.

The most difficult operation that can be imagined in politics, is to form a republican confederation among different states of unequal force, and to maintain a just equilibrium between power and weakness.

The idea of such a system was conceived by the Greeks: but instead of forming a body, they never produced more than an empty shadow.

* Polybius, lib. II. and Plutarch's *life of Cleomenes*.

Among them the Amphictyonie, or assembly of the states general, had no authority in great matters, and only regulated such trifles as keeping the temple of Apollo at Delphi in repair, and directing the celebration of the Pythian games.

To prove the insignificance of the pretended states general of Greece, it is only necessary to observe, that they have not been once named by Thucydides in the whole course of his history. Neither were they of the smallest consequence during the war of Peloponnesus; for in the lapse of twenty-eight years of the most dreadful civil discord, they never opened their mouths to quiet the minds, or reconcile the opposite interests of their fellow citizens; and no measures were ever taken by them to restore tranquillity and stop the effusion of Grecian blood. None ever applied to them for redress; and had even their decision been obtained, they wanted sufficient power and energy to put it in execution. It was thus, when they imposed a fine on the Lacedæmonians, that no means could be found to enforce payment.

Æschines the orator, who was endowed with a very subtle but perverse genius, and had been corrupted by Philip of Macedon, advised the states general to invest that prince with the execution of their decrees. He had the address to succeed in his culpable design, and, by the great-

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est of all errors recourse was had to a political remedy infinitely more dangerous than the disorder.* It would not be acting more imprudently, if the Germans at this day invited the Russians into the heart of the empire, to execute the decrees of the diet of Ratisbon.

The confederation of Greece became ineffectual, because it was composed of some nations without either numbers or influence, like the Dorians, the Maleans, and the Perrhæbians; while others, like the Lacedæmonians and Athenians, were often alone more powerful than all the rest of Greece. No sufficient coercive force existed there; and their political ties were too weak to restrain particular interests.

Another defect of this unequal association proceeded from the periodical meetings of the states general. Instead of sitting constantly, the deputies assembled only in spring and in autumn, when the evils which they should have prevented, had perhaps already taken place.* This inconvenience might have been remedied by extraordinary convocations; but the great republics were interested in preventing such measures. The deputies of Athens, said Demosthenes, must not be permitted to attend as-

* Æschines himself avows that he had excited the holy war; and this was only to furnish a pretext for the court of Macedonia to interfere in the internal disputes of Greece.

* Ubbo Emmius, *de Consilio Amphictyonum.*

semblies, which are so contrary to all our ancient institutions, that they can be regarded only as unlawful conventicles.

The Thessalians, on the other hand, deranged the balance of power, and destroyed all public confidence. They had a vote in the assembly of the states, but no dependance could be placed on men who were always either subjugated by tyrants, or plunged in the greatest anarchy. Besides, their sentiments appeared very suspicious and equivocal, ever since they had declared themselves in favor of the Persians, when their armies invaded Greece*

Traitors to their country, the Thessalians should then have been effaced from the list of the states general, and of the Amphictyonic nations. Yet they were suffered to remain members of this confederation, when all their actions tended only to excite suspicions and trouble.

It is easy to observe, that the reigning spirit of the Amphictyons was at all times highly superstitious. They undertook three holy wars against the inhabitants of some very small towns of Locris and Phocis, who had established a toll in their harbours, or had cultivated a field, which, according to the Amphictyons, should neither have been tilled nor sown. Nothing could be more absurd than the idea, that a soil ought to remain desert and useless, because it was

* Herodotus, lib. VII.

dedicated to Apollo. If such things were read in a relation of Cochin-China, or Tonquin, they could scarcely be believed; and yet the states general of Greece went in a body to oppose the industry of the Ozolæ Locrians. But the intrepid cultivators of the neighbourhood of Amphissa opposed, and even wounded some of these intruders, who should never have risked their dignity in exploits worthy of bailiffs. This affair occasioned several edicts, preserved in one of the harangues of Demosthenes, where he declares frankly, that the peasants were authorised by reason and justice in improving all fallow grounds.* It was Æschines, says he, the most fraudulent of politicians, who excited that tempest, in order to find a pretext for calling Philip of Macedon to the aid of the weakest party. Such was the origin of the holy war, the most cruel that ever, until then, had been known in Greece.

In Holland, the smaller provinces of the union have a vote equal to the most powerful; and the same disproportion was observable in Greece. The people of little Doris, consisting only of four small boroughs on the side of mount Oeta, sent deputies, whose suffrages had equal weight with those of the Athenians. Yet the latter, at one time, counted a thousand conquered towns

* See particularly the decree bearing the title of ἙΤΕΡΟΝ ΔΟΓΜΑ ΤΩΝ ΑΜΦΙΚΤΥΟΝΩΝ, in the harangue for the *Crown*.

under their dominion, in different parts of Europe and Asia.*

Athens, according to its real preponderance, should have possessed at least twice as many votes as those little nations scarcely known by name. It does not appear for instance, that the Maleans, who were included in the Amphictyonic union, could have raised in their whole territory more than four hundred infantry, and fifty cavalry. At the period we mention, they possessed only some trifling towns, of which Trachis, and Malea their capital, were almost entirely ruined.

The Amphictyons could not give any audience to ambassadors; and as none were ever sent to them by neighbouring nations, it proves clearly, that foreign powers did not consider Greece as a confederation, but consulted each republic particularly, and secretly. If some of the united states of America were now to form an alliance with France, and others with Great Britain, the federative part of congress would be from that instant annulled effectually. Yet the Lacedæmonians and the Athenians were frequently seen connecting themselves with the emperors of Persia, the kings of Macedonia, the despots of Thrace, and even with the tyrants of Sicily, without even communicating such treaties to the states general. Thus the Amphictyonic coun-

* Meursius, Fortuna Attica.

cil

cil had no knowledge whatever of the stipulations they contained, either for or against the common safety of the country.

It is to this defect we must attribute the misfortunes of Greece, because it favored the unjust views of the Lacedæmonians, who were always rebels to the decisions of the states general; always armed; and always intolerable. They were at length excluded from these assemblies;* and this ought to have taken place many centuries sooner, when, contrary to all principles of justice, they conquered the confederate state of Messenia.†

Lacedæmon should then have been constrained to restore what it had usurped, or never more admitted into an association, the chief intention of which was to guaranty all the states in the possession of their particular territories.

Thus, it is to the epoch of the conquest of Messenia, that we must trace back the cause of that discord which deranged the equilibrium and destroyed the union of the Greeks, and occasioned at length the total ruin of the most flourishing republics.

* Pausanias, lib. IX.

† Messenia, then in possession of the Dorians, was undoubtedly an Amphictyonic state, belonging to the general confederation of Greece, to which the Lacedæmonians themselves had been admitted in their character of Dorians only, and not as inhabitants of Peloponnesus.

By these details it may be judged, how far the moderns have succeeded, in writing the history of ancient Greece. No new light has ever been thrown by them on this important subject; and they seem to have contented themselves with copying each other. Nothing is more absurd than the elogies they bestow on the institution of the Amphictyons, by speaking with enthusiasm of its pretended efficacy in preserving the tranquility of the confederated states. Doctor Gillies, in publishing a voluminous work on ancient Greece, has not failed to repeat all the common prejudices with regard to the Amphictyons.* Men of his class discover a wonderful sagacity in disputing not only on trifling things, but on such as are altogether fabulous. They collect the most insignificant circumstances of the siege of Troy, and the expedition of Jason, even to the number of oars employed by the Argonauts, and doctor Gillies knows exactly the value of the golden fleece in pounds sterling.

III.—RELIGION OF THE ATHENIANS, AND THE ORACLES OF DELPHI AND DODONA.

Without entering here into the immense chaos of Grecian paganism, we propose only to throw

* History of ancient Greece.

some light on the most interesting points of the history of oracles, of prophetic books, and of the mysteries of Ceres.

It is necessary to observe, that the northern regions of Greece alone contained fatidical temples, consecrated to Jupiter and Apollo. These edifices were all remarkably situated on the principal eminences, such as mount Tmarus in Thesprotia, and mount Parnassus in Phocis, which were regarded by the Greeks as sacred, because they had in reality been the first spots occupied by their nation, on that part of the continent. In those days the higher points of the globe alone were habitable; for, as we have already observed, the periodical dissolution of snow deluged the valleys of Greece, before industry had opened canals to discharge the stagnant waters into the Mediterranean.

One of the most learned critics of this century, who has endeavoured to trace the origin of the Greeks, supposes that they once inhabited the region between the Caspian and Black sea,* in descending from the prodigious heights of Asia. These emigrants advanced afterwards to the west, and fixed themselves first in Chaonia and Thesprotia, around the mount Tmarus, since famous for the oracle of Dodona. In those

* Dissertations of Mr. Heyne, in *the collection of the Royal Society of Gottingen*; and Paulmier's *description of Ancient Greece*.

parts

parts the different hords, destitute of all ideas relative to arts or agriculture, were forced to depend for subsistence on the chace, or on the produce of the oak and beech. The species of acorn, which Virgil, by way of excellence, calls *Glandem Chaoniam*, still exposed for sale among the fruits and pot-herbs of the Spanish markets. In Pliny's time, it was introduced at the deserts of the Spaniards, who are now the only glandivorous nation in Europe.*

This explains clearly the religious respect professed by the ancient Greeks for certain trees, to them really prophetic in all the force of the term. When their branches were thinly garnished with fruits, it was easy to predict an unfortunate winter, and a long famine with all its concomitant miseries, where no resources could be drawn from agriculture. Even alimentary seeds could not always have been procured for the purposes of tillage; and it is probable that goats were not then domesticated, any more than the indigenous buffaloes of Thesprotia, Macedonia, Thessaly, and some other countries of Greece.

The reason, why the oracle of Dodona ori-

* Pliny, H. N. lib. XVI.

The oak of Chaonia and of Spain, is properly the QUERCUS AESCULUS, or rather QUERCUS ESCULENTA, the only species which can be employed as food for man. The Spaniards eat these acorns after having torrified them in the ashes.

ginated

ginated from a veneration for the oak and beech, can no longer appear problematical in the eyes of philosophers. It would be superfluous to discuss all the superstitious ceremonies invented afterwards by priests at different periods; but the origin of that worship is here explained by facts, too palpable to be rejected.

Some Greek tribes spread themselves from Chaonia along the heights of Parnassus; and the oracle of Delphi, situated to the south of mount Tmarus, was founded entirely on Hydromancy. Many fountains boiled up among the rocks of Phocis, but none equalled the murmurs of Castalia, or rather the Cassotis, which were heard, when the snow dissolved, at an amazing distance. This superstitious divination, by the noise of falling waters, was practised by the Germans, and other ancient nations, who conceived nothing to be more important than a limpid source, which seemed to invite mankind to fix themselves there, and to terminate at length the wanderings of an ambulatory life. Thus it is known, that the first villages or huts were constructed near springs of water; and this was absolutely necessary in Greece, where so many rivers, descending from the mountains in cascades or torrents, contained too much mud to be potable. Every thing tended there to augment the importance of pure fountains, where the hand of some beneficent divinity was sup-

posed

posed to administer relief to the wearied hunters, and refr sh the flocks in the bottom of some scorching valley.

No sooner were men persuaded that gods and goddesses presided over fountains, than they regarded the murmuring of the waters as prophetic. Impostors have never been wanting in either savage or civilized nations, to appropriate to themselves alone the power of interpreting pretended mysteries; and such was the origin of the oracle of Delphi. Father Baltus, and those who like him, have imagined that practices so absurd were connected at times with supernatural causes, spectors, and monsters, deserve to be considered as the silliest of mankind.

It was not at Castalia, as is vulgarly believed, but above the fountain Cassotis on the side of Parnassus, that credulity and superstition erected the tripod of Pythia, or the priestess of Delphi. That woman, however, was only a blind instrument in the hands of the *Aphetor*, or great prophet who claimed the right of explaining the oracle, and consequently of giving it whatever meaning or obscurity he thought proper. Afterwards, the wretched poets belonging to the temple of Apollo, turned every thing into verse, which frequently, as Plutarch acknowledges, neither possessed cadence nor measure; and never did the god of harmony receive such mortal affronts as in his own sanctuary.*

* Plutarch, in his treatise *why the oracles are no longer delivered in verse*: and Van Dale, *de oraculis*.

As

As the great versifiers of Greece would not degrade themselves so far as to be the subaltern agents of the prophets of Delphi, such ignorant men only were employed as could neither communicate colour, nor poetic shade to certain subjects. In such cases, they were forced to add in prose, what they could not turn into verse, as may be seen in the oracle cited by Demosthenes against Midias.

These composers of mount Parnassus became more and more ridiculous, until it was found absolutely necessary to renounce employing such disgraceful organs; and ever since that epoch the use of verse ceased at Delphi.

The priests of Dodona were equally illiterate, and yet they disposed of their answers at a very high price to republics, as well as individuals. The following decree was addressed by them to the Athenians on some particular occasion:

" We command you, in the name of God, to convey as soon as possible to Dodona, in atonement for your faults and sins, nine oxen capable of laboring the earth, eighteen heifers, a separate victim to be immolated to Dione the mother of Venus, and a table of brass, which shall be consecrated to Jupiter."*

* Oracles of this kind at Dodona were delivered in prose and called by the Greeks, Ἐκ ΔΩΔΩΝΗΣ ΜΑΝΤΡΕΙΑΙ. V. We have endeavoured to give this translation as near as possible to the natural sense of the text, concerning which the learned have very different opinions.

This

This oracle was delivered in a style not less confused and corrupt than the Latin, spoken now, at the court of Rome. Yet we can perceive that, besides the value of offerings, the Athenians were condemned to a journey of more than fifty leagues; for Dodona lies in the 40th and Athens in the 38th degree of latitude. If the smaller states of Greece had often interrogated the gods at that price, they would not have required much time to be completely ruined.

The prophets of the oak and the beech discovered less moderation than the priests of Delphi, because their oracle, situated in the centre of Thesprotia, attracted few pilgrims to such a distance. Thus, when any opportunity did present itself at Dodona, it was generally accompanied with extortion; while at Parnassus, a small profit was sufficient from the multitudes of men who repaired thither, with a desire of learning their destiny, at the expence of their fortune.

Plato, as well as Xenophon, who consulted in person the Apollo of Delphi, concerning his journey into Persia, was very far from attacking such superstition; and those who have been since styled the new Platonists, instead of banishing the chimeras of Theurgy, endeavoured to revive such as had sunk into discredit. The disciples of Epicurus, infinitely more consistent in their princples, and always unshaken in their system, gave such mortal blows to the pythia and

and prophets, that they fell into great discredit pute; and afterwards the first Roman emperors reduced them almost to absolute silence.

Van Dale, more a compiler than a critic, attributes that revolution to different causes, without observing that the most powerful of all was the timid policy of Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero, who, according to Lucan, closed the lips of the gods.* They were so credulous as to fear that the Greeks might interrogate the oracles concerning the secrets of the empire, and still more those of the imperial family, where murder, poison, incest, adultery, and the most horrid depravity were endeavoured to be concealed under an impenetrable veil. Independent of all these reasons, it is natural that a despotic government should banish those who pretend to speak in the name of heaven, because they hold a language still more absolute than the despots themselves.

IV.—PROPHETIC BOOK OF THE ATHENIANS.

It is in many respects very surprising, that all polished nations, on this unfortunate planet,

* — — --- *Delphica sedes*
Quod siluit, postquam reges timeure futura.
Atque Deos vetuere loqui.
PHARS. lib. V.

Nero distinguished himself particularly by the violent means he employed in desroying the oracle of Delphi.

have

have possessed books of mysteries, which must be regarded as the source of the greatest calamities experienced by mankind. In them we discover the germ and root of intolerance theological hatred, religious war, and all the dreadful devastations which the Athenians had to suffer on account of the mysteries of Ceres, when the priests of that goddess had cruelly butchered two strangers, under pretence that they were not initiated. On this the Macedonians, who undertook to avenge the blood of these victims, invaded Attica, and ravaged that country in such a manner that Greece never witnessed so much misery and destruction.*

Few even among the learned are informed at this day, that the Athenians possessed likewise a prophetic and mysterious book, called in their language the TESTAMENT, on which they pretended the safety of the republic depended. It was preserved with so much care, that no passage has ever transpired; and consequently the notions transmitted to us are very confined, but the conjectures they lead to are infinite.

This work of darkness appears however to have been of the same nature with the books of the Sybils at Rome, to which also the destiny of the nation was attached, according to the opinion of the priests and pontiffs. The more such a gross error was impressed on the minds of the

* Titus Livius, lib. XXXI.

people,

people, the easier did the politicians attain their object, by making these pretended prophecies a secret means of conducting the republic according to their wishes. This is the reason why the books of the Sybils are constantly produced in the Roman history; while at Athens the testament was buried in the same silence with the mysteries of Ceres. Mr. Maas, a man of great erudition, and well versed in Grecian literature, observed to me, that no ancient author has mentioned the fatidical book of the Athenians except Dicearchus in his famous harangue against Demosthenes, whom he accuses of having failed in respect towards this ineffable volume, on which, according to him, depended the salvation of the state.*

Those people are greatly mistaken, who imagine that the Testament of the Athenians contained nothing more than a collection of predictions by two celebrated Grecian impostors, called Bacis and Antiphylus. It concerned, most probably, the religious worship of Ceres, and was perhaps the very book carried annually in procession at the feast of Thesmophoria, by women chosen from the hundred and seventy villages of Attica.†

* ΤΑΣ ΑΠΟΡΡΗΤΟΥΣ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΑΣ, ΕΝ ΑΙΣ ΤΑ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΛΕΩΣ ΣΩΤΗΡΙΑ ΚΕΙΤΑΙ. Dinarchus *against Demosthenes*.

Mr. Reiske supposes, that this fatidical book was deposited with the areopagus; but the truth is, that nothing positive can be collected on this point.

† *Scholiast of Theocritus*, IDYLL. IV.

If such works, instead of being veiled with impenetrable clouds, had been examined by the rules of criticism, it would perhaps have appeared, that the Sybilline books of Rome were only an imitation of the Athenian testament, adapted to the Paganism of the Latins.

In those days nothing was easier than to issue supposed books; and it is certain that the absurd collection of dreams and chimeras, called the *Theogonia*, was an apocryphal work, falsely attributed to Hesiod.

As the Greeks were both credulous and fond of the marvellous, their religion became a fantastical edifice, which had neither root in heaven, nor foundation on earth. Prodigies were multiplied until the subject was so exhausted, that little could be added to the inventions of the ancient mythologists. Nothing was easier with them than reviving the dead, or removing a mountain; and they pretended, that the mount Lycabessus, situated to the south of Athens, had been transported thither by Minerva. That goddess had taken it from Pellane in the folds of her robe; but she let it fall with surprise, when informed of the culpable curiosity of the daughters of Cecrops.*

It is not extraordinary that theologists, who had such lively and brilliant imaginations, should reduce those of other countries to silence, by the

* Antigonus Carystius, ΠΕΡΙ ἹΣΤΟΡΙΩΝ ΠΑΡΑΔΟΞΩΝ.

greatness

greatness of the miracles they attributed to their gods. Neither nature nor common sense were consulted in such matters; for more good would have resulted from preventing a civil war among the Greeks, than from removing an hundred mountains, or stopping the course of as many rivers by the tones of the lyre of Orpheus and of Amphion.

V.—MYSTERIES OF CERES.

The most dangerous superstitions of the Greeks, were precisely those which brought money both to the priests and to the states. The Athenians protected the mysteries of Ceres, for no other reason than because they divided the profits with the Hierophantes; and Aristogiton, a financier, who, according to Demosthenes, was the greatest villain of his day, succeeded in having a capitation imposed on all pilgrims who wished to be initiated. When Diagoras of Melos afterwards maintained openly, that those ceremonies were contrary to virtue, and corrupted the manners of the Greeks, no person could refute him; but an attic talent was promised to whoever would take away his life. Such was the answer made to Diagoras of Melos; for, even in those days the theologists reasoned with poignards and burning coals, like inquisitors, instead of re-

 curring

curring to the ordinary rules of logic, which they confessed were not made for them.

When the financiers had received their demands, it was necessary to satisfy the priests of Eleusis: and all these sums united became so considerable, that lovers made a merit with their mistresses in defraying for them the expence of initiation. The orator Lysias paid for the young Metanira, with whom he was smitten, and who appeared there among the crowd of women from Athens and Corinth. The dangers were truly great in such nocturnal assemblies, where the law of silence favored the hardiest project, and the rashest enterprise.* At length those scandalous events, called adventures, became so frequent there, that they afforded a constant supply of intrigues for the comic poets.† They carried things so far as to suppose that young women were led, by the force of their passions, to abandon themselves in the dark to unknown persons. From this resulted a very complicated theatrical plot, in the *Miser* of Plautus, where the daughter of an Athenian, called Euclion, is supposed to become a mother, without knowing the father of her child.‡

It was therefore altogether natural, that the women of Athens should discover the greatest

* *Pleading against the courtesan Neæra.*

† Fabric. *Biblioth. Græca. notit. comicorum deperdit.* lib. II.

‡ Prologue to the *Aulularia.*

pre-

predilection for Eleusis, where luxury, love, intrigue, libertinism, superstition, gaming, and commerce, were so closely connected. The most superficial knowledge of the Grecian character is sufficient to satisfy us, that traffic was not neglected during the nine days employed in celebrating the mysteries; and fairs were held round the temple of Ceres and Proserpine, as at all the other feasts of European Greece.

We have now to examine, in what consisted the pretended secret, revealed on such occasions to the votaries. The Hierophantes began by announcing, that those who had been first washed in the Ilissus, and conducted afterwards in procession to the sanctuary of Ceres, would inhabit eternally the delightful groves of Elysium, amidst ineffable enjoyments. All other human beings were to be plunged in the mud of the Tenarus, and tormented for ever by all the punishments of poetic hell.*

Even the greatest hero, and the most virtuous man ever born in Greece, did not escape this dreadful prescription. Epaminondas was prevented from being initiated by the laws of his country; for the Thebans had an irrevocable edict, prohibiting nocturnal mysteries, and initiations of every kind, without any regard either to the name they bore, or the pretext under

* Meursius, ELEUSINIA.

which

which they were proposed to be introduced.*

Little reflection is necessary to perceive, that truth and reason were with the Thebans, and nothing more than fraud and falsehood on the side of the priests of Athens, who sought the shades of night to seduce simple and credulous men, to whom they sold for money the enjoyments of a world not their own.

To prove the utility of mysteries, it should be demonstrated, that they rendered the Greeks more virtuous, and above all more equitable. But, on the contrary, their depravity continued always augmenting, and their contempt for oaths and contracts became so notorious, that, according to Polybius not even the shadow of good faith could any longer be found in Greece.† Wretches were seen perjuring themselves an hundred times in a day, without fear or remorse, because they pretended, that heaven had been assured to them by the voice of the Hierophantes. False oaths became so common, that when a pleader met any friend by chance, he asked him, without the least ceremony, *dani-*

* Pagondas, who was Bœotarch in the year four hundred and twenty-four before our Era, first proposed the law against the mysteries. In the works of Cicero, the name of Pagondas has been strangely disfigured, by the carelessness of those who have copied them; but this error is easily rectified.

† Lib. VI.

son

son moi martyrion, lend me your testimony in a certain affair; and this pretended witness acquitted himself of the task to a wonder. On appearing before the judge, he would swear without hesitation to any thing he was desired, in calling on the waters of Styx, or the thunder of Jupiter; and yet many matters of the greatest importance are believed at this day in Europe, merely on the testimony of witnesses of that nation.

It is not without strong proofs, and weighty reasons, that the theologists of Greece are accused of having been the authors of this disgraceful depravity, and flagrant perfidy, never to be forgotten in the annals of mankind. The priests of Eleusis in particular could never answer three objections, which were repeated to them continually, without effect.

In the first place, it was represented as absurd to introduce such mysteries during the night, as could not be celebrated with safety by day. In the next place, nothing could be more ridiculous than requiring silence with regard to a doctrine, which could not be too public, if true; and if false, the preachers of it were the most culpable of mortals. Lastly, it is contrary to all notions of natural charity, to devote the three fourths of mankind to eternal punishments; and nothing but the most sordid interest could have prevented their minds from revolting at such an

abo-

abominable proscription. Philosophers, it was said to these impostors, wish happiness to all mankind; and you desire nothing but the greatest evils. In comparing these sentiments it appears evidently, that you are nothing more than the instruments of intolerance, and of an absurd fanaticism, founded alone on gross fables, such as the pretended arrival of Ceres in Attica, where even children know she never appeared.* These three arguments could not be refuted, either by the Hierophantes, or the great torch bearer Callias; and yet they continued to maintain a system, the folly and danger of which were demonstrated.

The most circumstantial treatise now extant on the mysteries of Ceres, is that of Mr. Meiner's in his Philosophical Medley, where he has collected even the smallest circumstances relative to this part of the Athenian worship. One opinion, however, of this learned man, although supported by that of Bishop Warburton, does not appear to be entirely free from error. They pretend, that the initiated were told to consider the gods of paganism as nothing more than deified men, who were consequently

* The compiler of the inscriptions on the *Parian marbles*, mentions the arrival of Ceres at Eleusis as a real epoch; and from this we may infer that he, like the greater part of the Greeks, had no idea of historical criticism. All the epochs, relative to the most ancient kings of Attica, are likewise chimerical, for nothiug certain is known of those princes.

unworthy of their incense.* Such a revelation would have been at once extravagant and false in all the force of the terms; for no deified man or woman existed among the six grand gods, and six grand goddesses of Greece. Without entering here into scientific and thorny disquisitions, it is only necessary to have recourse to the first elements, and most incontestable points of mythology, where Apollo was the sun, and Diana the moon.

The priests of Eleusis uttered enough of inconsistencies, without our adding others, of which they most probably never entertained the most distant idea.

With regard to the moral character of these pretended priests, some opinion can be formed by comparing the historical circumstances, transmitted to us by the Greeks themselves, concerning Callias, who was, as we have said, the great torch bearer of Ceres, and consequently one of the principal actors in those holy frauds, called mysteries.

This man was regarded as the model of bad citizens; and never did Athens produce any person with a more depraved heart, or more fatal genius. He had publicly an incestuous connexion with a mother and her daughter; and after having dissipated the large fortune of his father Hipponicus, he lived afterwards entirely by

* *Melange Philosophique, de Mons. Meiners.*

by exactions, calumnies, and intrigues. Greece never produced a greater villain, or more despicable wretch; and Iphicrates treated him as an imposter before all the Athenians.*

Such was the priest Callias, whose presence would have banished the gods, if ever any thing divine could have existed with so much profanation. This worship, among a thousand other evils, gave rise to accusations of impiety, and to the tribunal of the king of sacrifices. Great force, it was said, must be used to protect institutions, so weak in themselves, that they could never have subsisted, if discussed according to ordinary rules, and common notions. As the initiated were enjoined, under pain of death, not to speak of the mysteries, those, who had been victims to the Hierophantes, dared not to complain, or prevent others from being drawn into the same abyss. By such extraordinary means did superstition long succeed in preserving its energy, and in extending the limits of its empire.

The grand mysteries were really nothing more than a confirmation of what passed, as we have said, at the smaller mysteries, where the initiated were baptized in the waters of the Ilissus, in a solitary place, to the south of Athens, called *the Chaces*. It included the mount Lycabessus, all the hill Musæus, extended to the foot of

* Aristotle, *Rhetor.* lib. III. and Andocides, *on the mysteries.*

mount

mount Hymettus, and contained two temples consecrated to Diana and Eleusinian Ceres, in the latter of which the little mysteries were celebrated.

The different epithets of mystical and holy river, given to the Ilissus by the Greek poets, had a direct reference to the ablutions of the initiated, who acquired from that moment the privilege of entering at least into the outer avenues of the Elysian fields. To receive a distinguished place, or what Aristotle terms a right of precedence among the blessed, it was necessary to receive the confirmation of the grand mysteries in the town of the Eleusinians, who had a small river, called, the little Cephisus. In dry weather, this stream did not afford water sufficient for the ceremony of lustration; but when the snows dissolved, it became an impetuous torrent, and overflowed all the valley of Iapis, even to the very confines of Megaris.*

In that compilation, entitled by Mr. Cousin Despreaux, a history of Greece, it is pretended, that the temple of Ceres, at Eleusis, contained a prodigious quantity of riches. On the contrary, not the smallest silver vase was left there, because

* This mode of employing running water for the ablution of so many thousand persons discovered great prudence. But in many places of Europe, at this day, the children are baptized in filthy stagnant water; which cannot fail to be highly noxious.

nothing

nothing remained in surety from the Lacedæmonians, who, in the days of king Cleomenes, plundered, as is known, the ancient temple of Eleusis, afterwards rebuilt under the inspection of Pericles. It was within the walls of Athens, that the numerous ornaments, necessary for the celebration of the mysteries, were preserved; among which appeared Lingams, and other obscure symbols, evidently of Egyptian origin. We cannot therefore be surprised at finding philosophers, such as Diagoras of Melos, reprobating a worship, charged with practices so contrary not only to notions of common sense, but to all ideas of modesty.

Some authors have insinuated, that the initiated had to confess their faults before the Hierophantes; and at Pheneon in Arcadia, the high priest of Ceres placed a small statue of that goddess in the folds of his robes, and afterwards distributed stripes among the devotees, as a chastisement. It was nearly in the same manner that some penitentiaries of Italy behaved towards the ambassadors of Henry the fourth of France. They were far from suspecting that this ceremony belonged originally to paganisim, and that ever since the highest periods of antiquity it had been practised by the Arcadians, who were always a rude people. No vestige, however, of this usage could be discovered at Eleusis, where the inhabitants possessed too much polite-

ness

ness to receive strangers in a manner so contrary to what was called attic urbanity.

In some parts of European Greece and Asia Minor, the mysteries of Ceres and of Bacchus were considered as very distinct ceremonies, and even incompatible in the opinion of the Egyptian priests, who never dared to taste, in any manner, the juice of the grape. But the priests of Athens, always fruitful in expedients, had contrived to unite these institutions; and this gave rise to that famous procession, which frequently was composed of thirty thousand pilgrims. Crowned with leaves of myrtle, they carried annually the statue of Bacchus to Eleusis, departing from the Ceramicus of Athens, and following the sacred way, while shouts of joy resounded through all the valleys of Diacri, and the plain of Thria.

The dames of Athens, in open cars, superbly ornamented, led the way in these orgies; and their amorous adventures, says Aristophanes, commenced long before they reached the place of their destination.* The discourse they held along this road was so very licentious, that all obscene conversation was vulgarly called *the language of the chariots*. Le Poussin has chosen these ambulatory Bacchanalia to decorate several of his paintings, and they appear likewise on some ancient bas-reliefs, found at Eleusis, which represent all

* In the *Plutus*.

all the initiated in mystical robes, carrying lighted torches. It cannot be denied, that this spectacle must have been very amusing to travellers, who did not all visit the sacred way, to take a direct part in the mysteries, for great numbers were distinguished by the name of Theores, or spectators.

Those, says Maximus of Tyre, who admire religious ceremonies, can no where gratify their taste better than at Athens, where a particular genius reigns in the direction of such amusements. No other place afforded either processions or dances so magnificent; and the inhabitants never wanted a pretext for some new feast; for they had even instituted one in commemoration of the pretended deluge of Deucalion. The anniversaries of the different signal victories, obtained by the fleets and armies of the republic, were so many occasions for rejoicings; and in this manner the battle of Marathon had been celebrated for more than seven hundred years. But the harvest and the vintage were attended with extraordinary splendor, among people who called themselves the inventors of agriculture, and pretended to have supplied the other Greeks with the first alimentary grains, which terminated the miseries of a savage life, and brought discredit on the acorns of Chaonia.*

* *Adsunt Athenienses, unde humanitas, doctrina, religio, fruges, jura, leges ortæ, atque in omnes terras distributæ putantur.* CICERO for Flaccus..

Isocrates

Isocrates declares that, in his time, different nations continued to bring annually the first fruits of their harvest to Athens, in token of gratitude; and whenever this is neglected, says he, the oracle of Delphi reminds them seriously of their duty.* It is very possible, that the little cantons, subsisting under the protection of Athens, when they found that republic fortunate in war, presented some ears of grain, gathered before the rest; but on any reverse of fortune, they failed not to carry their incense elsewhere, from that spirit of levity which always distinguished the Greeks. This custom, therefore, does not afford any historical proof, that agriculture had been invented in the territory of Eleusis, where the fields certainly did not appear to be the first that were tilled in Greece, as we have sufficiently demonstrated in the preceding volume.

The first plants of the vine, cultivated around mount Icarus, had probably been brought from Thebes in Bœotia; and with regard to the olives, as Tournefort has observed in his travels, they are evidently indigenous in many parts of Greece, where their nature has been improved by inoculation. Euripides pretends, that they were originally transplanted into Attica from the island of Salamis; and they are likewise found wild, in our days, on some of the mountains of Crete.

* Isocrates, *in Panegyr.* and Ariſtides, *in Eleusin.*

If

If the Athenians however were not in reality the inventors, it must at least be allowed that they had carried agriculture to a greater degree of perfection than any other nation of European Greece. In a country so exceedingly barren, they effected the most astonishing things, and did not leave any spot fallow, which human industry could have rendered in the least fertile.

The genius and manners of the Athenians have now been treated sufficiently in detail, and we shall therefore terminate here our discussions concerning that people, to pass into the territory of Lacedæmon, where a singular race of men had adopted customs no less extraordinary.

The Athenians and Lacedæmonians were, properly speaking, the only original nations in Greece; and all the others could only be considered as shades, partaking, more or less, of these two principal colours. The inhabitants of Crete, Melos, Rhodes, Megaris, Messenia, and some parts of Peloponnesus, imitated the customs of Sparta; while the other Greeks of Europe adopted in general the modes and civil institutions of Athens, unless where local circumstances occasioned some deviation, too trifling to excite a general interest.

END OF THE THIRD PART.

PART THE FOURTH.

SECT. IX.

THE LACEDÆMONIANS.

I.—PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON THIS PEOPLE.

Before the art of judging nations had been reduced to fixed rules and principles, the uncertainty with regard to their virtues and vices was so great, that all conjectures concerning them, depended entirely on chance.

Military constitutions in general received the most extravagant eulogies; and historians, who were seldom philosophers, considered nothing more brilliant in the whole extent of the ancient world, than the pretended exploits of the Lacedæmonians. Yet that nation could only be classed with barbarians, who neither cultivated the sciences, nor the arts. Nothing was thought of there but sharpening weapons, to be employed in plundering the defenceless, until the town of Lacedæmon became, what Plato calls, the lion's den, or the depository of all the gold and silver in Greece. It is easy to discover by what means

so great treasures entered there; but no traces are found of the manner in which they were dissipated.

This depredation, carried on for many centuries by such insatiable robbers, forms the most gloomy picture in Grecian History. Perfidy is constantly seen there substituted for open force; and all notions of justice, however sacred, were always sacrificed to the smallest allurements of sordid interest.

The most inconsistent work ever published on the Lacedæmonians is a dissertation by Mr. de Gourcy; and it is disagreeable to be under the necessity of adding, that it has been applauded by the academy of inscriptions at Paris, nearly in the same manner that the tragedies of Dionysius the tyrant were crowned at Athens.

Yet Mr. de Gourcy was ignorant of the first elements of historical criticism, and did not possess sufficient penetration to distinguish the most striking truths from the grossest errors. Not satisfied with raising Lycurgus above the common level of mankind, he makes him a god, and asserts, that human nature never produced so great a genius.*

Expressions cannot easily be found to characterize such an extravagant enthusiast, who betrays a total ignorance of ancient history, where the

* *Philosophical and political History of the laws of Lycurgus.*

the greatest obscurity prevails with regard to Lycurgus.

Plutarch acknowledges candidly, that the Greeks knew nothing certain with regard to that man; and he relates what was circulated concerning him, without being able to cite two authors, who agree exactly on any one of those fables.*

Nothing is less astonishing than the uncertainty of the Greeks in this point, when we consider that the pretended institutions of Lycurgus were never committed to writing; and the authenticity of any one of his laws, known to us at this day, cannot be guarantied by the rules of sound criticism.

No Lacedæmonian ever applied himself to the study of literature, or history; and the learned men of Greece were not desirous of travelling in a region so inhospitable, where strangers were persecuted without mercy. Neither has any philosopher of the present times ever visited cape Tenarus, to study the manners and usages of those robbers of Laconia, called Mainots, by whom he must expect to be plundered on landing, and assassinated when he advanced into the country.

Hellanicus, the most ancient of the Greek historians, has constantly asserted, that Lycurgus had never been even legislator at Lacedæmon.

* *Introduction to the Life of Lycurgus.*

dæmon.* If this vague term is employed to denote strictly the person who introduces order among a society of men, and imposes civil government upon a whole state, then the opinion of Hellanicus cannot be disputed. None of the great political institutions of the Spartans could be the work of Lycurgus; because, long before his birth, two kings had reigned together at Lacedæmon; and the five annual Ephori were first created long after his death. On this combined power of the kings and the Ephori the civil government entirely depended; and as to the senate of old men, the Dorians had already a council of that kind, before they conquered Lacedæmon. Among all the savage nations of the earth, no authority is considered superior to that of old men, which adapted to a state of nature, and taught by instinct, is the same in all climates.

Lycurgus, evidently, neither instituted the Ephori, nor the Dyarchy of Sparta, which can only be regarded as an effect of pure chance. The queen of Aristodemus was delivered at one birth of two sons; and either by the intrigues of that princess, or some other influence, now unknown, it was determined that these twins should reign together, and transmit their shares in the monarchy to their descendants. This decision, so contrary to the first principles of

* Strabo's *Geography*, lib. VIII.

sound

sound policy, gave rise to two collateral dynasties at once on the same throne: the elder branch was called Agidæ, and the other Eurypontidæ.

This double royalty was sufficient to crush national liberty in the first place, and afterwards could not fail to excite a civil war between the reigning branches, in which, according to the ordinary course of ambition, one or the other must be extinguished in its own blood. Great penetration was not necessary to predict such catastrophes; and the Lacedæmonians, menaced in this manner by the greatest misfortunes, actually endeavoured to establish a magistracy capable of counterbalancing the power of the two kings, and of terminating the dissensions of such rivals.

The Eurypontidæ, who were the weakest and least respected, because they properly formed the younger branch, favored as much as possible the institution of the Ephori. Without some such support, they would sooner or later have been exterminated by the Agidæ, to whom the throne belonged by the laws of birth-right.*

From all these whimsical arrangements, in which Lycurgus had no part, resulted at length

* King Theopompus, one of the younger branch, called Eurypontidæ, first prevailed on the Lacedæmonians to create the Ephori, an hundred and thirty years after the death of Lycurgus; and his object in this, he confessed, was to provide for the safety of himself and his family.

a form of government so irregular, that it could not be defined by any Greek politician; and no nation ever attempted to adopt it as a model. Neither human reason nor inspiration had any influence on this strange system, introduced entirely by chance, or that blind cause, which gives birth to princes; for if a queen had not been delivered of twins, two kings would never have reigned together at Lacedæmon.

It appears by the most probable accounts concerning Lycurgus, that he travelled into Crete, and transferred some of the customs and exercises of that island into his own country. All this did not discover any creative genius, nor the smallest appearance of a man inspired by the divinity, whatever may have been asserted to this effect by some enthusiasts of antiquity, and repeated by others of later times.

From the marked affinity between the Cretan and Lacedæmonian institutions, the greater part of the Greek authors have acknowledged, that it could only proceed from the most servile imitation. Polybius is the only person who has endeavoured to combat this opinion, so generally received in Greece; but his arguments are so weak and inconclusive, that his greatest partisans abandoned him on that point.

The Cretans, at once hunters and shepherds, were divided into a great number of independent cantons, where mutual robberies were carried on during

during their civil wars; and their discord frequently rendered them the prey of the pirates and adventurers of the Mediterranean. This critical situation inspired them with the idea of remaining always armed, of forming companies of soldiers who dined together, and finally of considering military exercises as absolutely necessary to defend themselves against neighbouring states and foreign robbers.

These institutions seemed well adapted to the Lacedæmonians, who formed a small nation in the midst of an extensive conquered country; and they feared the ancient inhabitants, reduced to slavery, as much as the Cretans dreaded each other.

The Spartans did not allow the Laconians they had subdued to possess either sword, javelin, or dart; and although disarmed in that manner, they were massacred secretly, in order to diminish their numbers. It is well known, that the young men of Lacedæmon, provided with helmets, cuirasses, and lances, went in chace of the Helotes, who were naked, and destitute of every kind of defensive weapons. They drew them into ambuscades, and attacked them, as ferocious beasts of prey rush on a flock they have long watched in the bottom of some narrow valley.

Plato and Aristotle assert, that Lycurgus himself had taught this horrid policy to the Spar-

 tans,

tans, who, to calm the remorse excited by so much perfidy and cruelty, even in the most atrocious minds, adopted the mode of declaring a kind of war against the Helotes in the midst of peace. When the Ephori entered into office, they mounted the tribunal, and published aloud, that it was lawful to kill, without scruple, all slaves who could be drawn into an ambuscade. In one day two thousand of these unfortunate beings had their hearts pierced with poignards, at the feet of the household gods of the Lacedæmonians, where they had been invited to receive their liberty. Already they were crowned with festoons of flowers, like freed men, when they fell by the hands of barbarians, as victims are immolated, or beasts slaughtered in the shambles.

When it was alledged that such conduct received the approbation of the oracle of Delphi, it must first have been supposed, that this pretended god was himself an abominable monster, who gave his sanction to a code dictated by perfidy, and written in letters of blood. Thus one absurdity raised on another, occasioned at length such confusion of ideas, that nothing similar ever took place among mankind.

To introduce some light into this chaos, it will be necessary to take a general survey of that part of Greece, called LACONIA, where the earth was

every

every where stained with blood by the most barbarous of all conquerors.

II.—GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF LACONIA.

Peloponnesus had altogether the figure of a cone, the summit of which was formed by Arcadia. From this kind of peak two chains of rocks extended from north to south into the bosom of the Mediterranean, where they formed cape Tenarus on one side, and cape Malea on the other. All the space between these arms and the sea was LACONIA, which, from the confines of Argolis to those of Messenia, contained about one hundred and fifty square leagues.

That country appeared at a distance like a crater, from being almost totally environed by high mountains, which, covered with thick forests of fir trees, were scarcely passable for an army of enemies; but after having surmounted these heights, one easy descent continued to the very bottom of a long valley, watered by the Eurotas. The chief ornaments of that river, so celebrated in mythology, consisted of thickets of myrtles and laurels, which flourished wild along its banks, while prodigious numbers of swans appeared on the surface of the water. When the snow melted on the mountains, the Eurotas could scarcely be kept within its bed by the

the most solid dykes, although in the middle of summer it was no longer navigable for the smallest barges.

The town of Sparta or Lacedæmon, situated in the northern part of that valley, was surrounded, to a great extent, with vineyards, alleys of plane-trees, plantations of olives, pleasure-gardens, and summer-houses. There, says Xenophon, the troops of Epaminondas, after the battle of Leuctra, found an immense booty; for those, who had pillaged all the states of Greece, were then destined to the same misfortune, and punished as they deserved.*

In departing from Lacedæmon towards the south, the traveller arrived at Amycles, where the habitations surpassed all others by the charms of their situation. This was the most fertile country of all Laconia, and the most delightful spot in Peloponnesus. Wild hyacinths particularly abounded in spring through all the country; and Polybius assures us, that the beauty of the trees, and the vivacity of their verdure, were equalled by nothing but the luxuriance of their fruit.† The only inconvenience there was an excessive degree of heat, occasioned by the proximity of mount Taygetus, which

* Xenophon, HELLENICA. lib. VI.

† According to the expressions of Polybius Amycles, was ΤΟΠΟΣ ΚΑΛΛΙΔΕΝΔΡΟΤΑΤΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΛΛΙΚΑΡΠΟΤΑΤΟΣ; and this is all that can be said of a beautiful landscape.

reflected

reflected the rays of the sun at the approach of the summer solstice; while in winter, the summits of those rocks were always covered with snow; and they have appeared to some modern navigators, even in the month of May, like a white over the horizon of the Morea.

Lacedæmon, at a distance of more than twenty miles from the sea, could never have been very mercantile; and it was particularly excluded from the sphere of commerce in Greece by the impossibility of navigating the Eurotas with loaded vessels. As the Lacedæmonians had occasions for some place to assemble their naval forces, and part of their merchant ships, they chose for this purpose the town of Gytheum, at the mouth of a small river on the Laconic gulf, known at this day by the name of *Colokythia*. There they dug a very spacious bason, defended on one side by moles, and on the other by so many ramparts and fortifications, that neither Epaminondas, nor Philip, son of Demetrius, in the midst of their victories, could gain possession of this port, even after they had defeated all the armies of Sparta. That circumstance alone demonstrates the error of those, who imagine that the Spartans, confiding in their bravery alone, never intrenched themselves in the middle of Laconia. Reasons of policy prevented them indeed from enclosing their capital with walls, through fear that one or both of the kings might

introduce

introduce despotism; but as their princes were prevented by a positive law from commanding the fleets, their influence on the marine at Gytheum occasioned little apprehension of danger. In this port they not only fitted out their fleets, but loaded the greatest part of the merchant ships destined for Crete, Africa, and Egypt, where, Thucydides says, they carried on a regular commerce. As they had an irresistable inclination for piracy, their corsairs, in time of war, were the scourge of the Athenian merchants, who, to insure at least their remittances, had recourse, as we have already seen, to bills of exchange; and in this manner they secured a part of their fortune from the attempts of the Spartans.

In proportion to the distance from the Eurotas, the country became more elevated, and consequently less fertile, especially when the ruggedness of the surface rendered common methods of agriculture exceedingly painful to animals. Thus the produce of such lands did not equal, by a great deal, that of the plains between Pellanes and Sellasia, occupied by the nobles of Lacedæmon at the conquest, leaving nothing, says Isocrates, to the people but stony fields and constant toils. From this, continues he, resulted an infinity of complaints and reclamations against the agrarian laws, which were really so unjust, that they cannot be considered

otherwise

otherwise than as a species of robbery, or tyranny.*

In consequence of the great inequality of surface, some towns, situated on the slope of the mountains, were plentifully supplied with water, while others, nearer the sea, such as Pyrrhicus, experienced at times the greatest scarcity. It was at Cyphante, says Pausanias, that Atalanta, returning from the chace, oppressed with thirst, struck a rock with her dart, and produced a fountain.†

The impossibility of forming meadows, or pasturage, on the high grounds, rendered cavalry so very expensive, that it became a part of the great imprecation of the Lacedæmonians against all their enemies: "May you be condemned," said they, "to construct dykes along the Eurotas, to build houses, feed horses, and possess faithless wives!" This, according to them, was the surest road to ruin, without affording any enjoyment in return.

The eastern part of Laconia, anciently called Maleatis, and now, through corruption, Malvasia, contained many vineyards, but little woodlands; while the vast forest of Enoras extended along the foot of mount Taygetus, and sheltered numerous flocks of deer, stags, wild boars, and particularly that race of bears so common on all the mountains of Greece.

* Iocrates, PANATH.

† Pausanias, LACONIC.

On leaving this forest, the points of two rocks, called *Thyrides* by the inhabitants, were seen at a distance, in the form of a huge obelisk on the promontory of Tenarus, the base of which was excavated by subteraneous fires, and the black marble found there belonged really to a class of lavas. It was at the entrance of these caverns, coloured with the smoke of ancient volcanos, that the mythologists placed not only the gates of poetic hell, but likewise the throne of the winds, and the stables of Neptune. The temple of that god, dug in the rock like a grotto, was surrounded with a thick forest of fir trees, which augmented the gloomy horror of the scene, while nothing was heard around but the hoarse noise of waves dashing against the reefs of Tenarus. The wrecks of ships shattered by the tempests, were often borne there on the foaming surge; and no place in Greece united so many doleful images. Nothing however affected the traveller so much as the ruins of the unfortunate Helos, at the mouth of the Eurotas. Its inhabitants were reduced to the most insupportable slavery, from having military service added to domestic drudgery. Even negroes can sleep in peace, but the Helotes were exposed at the head of the battalions of Sparta to the darts and fury of the enemy.

Helos was once counted among the hundred towns of Laconia, contained in a space of one hundred

hundred and fifty square leagues. The greater part of these habitations, constructed by the ancient Achæans, were successively destroyed during the wars of the Spartans; and those, which escaped such explosions, perished by dreadful earthquakes, proceeding from the conflagration of volcanic substances, concentred in the caverns of mount Taygetus, and Tenarus. It would appear, that nature had conspired with man to desolate that unhappy country; but no part was so cruelly ravaged, says Polybius, as the confines of Arcadia and Argolis, where combats and massacres were continual. The Lacedæmonians endeavoured always to extend their boundaries on the domains of their neighbours, who opposed the agressors by fire and sword, until the earth was covered with carcases and ruins.

Already in the days of Strabo, the hundred ancient towns of Laconia were reduced to thirty trifling places, notwithstanding the pains taken to embellish them in his description. He had the art of seeing great matters, where observers, more judicious, saw nothing more than shadows; for Titus Livius speaks of all the habitations of that country, except Gythera and Lacedæmon, as nothing more than *vici & castella*. The ancient inhabitants of Laconia, who were the most unfortunate people that ever existed on the surface of the globe, could once have raised, as Aristotle affirms, an army of thirty thousand

men

men; but the consequences of a military and destructive government, not less fatal there than in the towns, reduced them, after several centuries of wars and devastations, to a small number of slaves or beggars. Yet depopulation was still more rapid among the Lacedæmonians of the Doric race, of whom, according to Macrobius, only fifteen hundred individuals remained under the reign of Agis; and Plutarch has calculated them at not more than seven hundred.*

King Cleomenes, who succeeded Agis, finding the state almost destitute of men, created nine thousand citizens out of the freed Helotes, and tributary Laconians. Scarcely had he ended this operation, when agitated by his ordinary fury, he ventured to conduct them against the Macedonians; and in a terrible defeat, all the Lacedæmonians perished, except two hundred, who were afterwards exterminated by Nabis.†

The pilots of antiquity required three days to navigate the length of the coast of Laconia, in vessels wrought by oars, and following all the windings of the land. This passage began at the mouth of a little river, called the Pamesos, under the walls of Leuctra, on the confines of Laconia, and continued to the port of Prasia towards the east on the gulf of Argolis. None of the different islands, seen in this course, were habitable,

* Saturnalia, lib. I. and Plutarch's *life of Agis.*

† Plutarch's *life of Cleomenes.*

except

except CYTHERA; and this, considered as dependant on the continent, was separated from it by a canal of only five thousand paces in breadth, but very perilous in stormy weather. Ships were then in danger of being cast on the promontory of Malea; and the very sight of those rocks struck the Greek navigators with dismay, because they were ignorant of the elements of their art. It would have been easy to avoid this dangerous strait, celebrated for so many shipwrecks, by bearing more to the south, and doubling the outermost point of Cythera. The inhabitants of this, like those of the other sterile islands of the Archipelago, from their laborious and economical disposition, were compared to men who had formerly been ants, and still retained their ancient character. To work, heap up, and not enjoy, were in their opinion the greatest of all gratifications.*

It was only necessary to land in Cythera to be convinced of the excessive vanity of the ancient mythologists, whose imagination, little enlightened, had placed the habitation of voluptuousness in that island among fields eternally covered with flowers, and under thickets of myrtle consecrated to the loves. Instead of this, nothing was seen but a frightful heap of shelving rocks, exceedingly barren, and, according to the pilot

* Heraclides of Pontus, ΠΕΡΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΩΝ; and Ovid's *Metamorph.* lib. VII.

Scylax, about one hundred furlongs in length. Among the interstices of the cliffs no shrubs could be cultivated, except the vine and fig-tree, nor any grain except barley, and the only domestic animals there, were goats. But as Laconia was not the country of gaiety, the song of its egicores never rivalled that of the shepherds of Arcadia along the Alpheus and the Ladon.

Thucydides asserts, that when the Athenians conquered Cythera in the war of Peloponnesus, they could not obtain more than four attic talents, or seven hundred and fifty pounds sterling of annual tribute. It was therefore from the convenience of its harbour, alone, that the possession of this island interested so much the Lacedæmonians, who had formed a port for their merchant vessels in the great road of Scandeus; and already, in the remotest times, the Phœnicians were established in a place known at this day by the name of *Phenicori*. It is no longer matter of doubt with the learned, who have studied the monuments of Greek paganism, that the Venus Urania, represented by the Cytheræans under the figure of an armed woman, has been originally the same divinity with the Astarte of Phœnicia. The inhabitants of that country were drawn to this iſland by the abundance of certain shell-fish, employed in dying purple. Several establishments were formed in Laconia for the same purpose; but they could never communi-

cate

cate to that colour the vivacity of the Tyrian tints, which surpassed those of Greece as much as scarlet is superior to madder.*

With regard to the other natural productions of Laconia, they consisted in ship-timber, iron, lead, copper, coloured stone, such as green marble and emeralds of mount Taygetus. The arts exercised there had for the most part some connection with metallurgy, and the temper of Laconic iron was so celebrated, that all weapons of that kind had the preference in the fairs of Peloponnesus. Joinery in general, executed around Lacedæmon, was much esteemed, such as chairs, tables, and above all those articles of luxury so famous among the ancients, called Laconic beds, because they were filled with the down of the swans, which were so numerous on the Eurotas, in the neighbourhood of Amycles.

Such was the territory, occupied at first by the Achæans, and afterwards conquered by the Spartans, who originally inhabited the country around mount Oeta, in the thirty-ninth degree

* The island of Cythera had its name from the word *Cerythera*, signifying a place where the shell-fish, called *Ceryx*, were found, from which the Greeks procured their purple dye. The ancient name of the island was *Porphyrusa*, derived likewise from this shell, which was the symbol of Cytheræan Venus; it was employed by the ancient heralds of Greece, as a trumpet to assemble the people, and on this account they were called *Ceryces*.

of north latitude, where they occupied, in a very rough and barren spot, four or five pitiful towns, and these properly formed the whole territory of little Doris.

The mountaineers of Oeta were not savages in all the force of the term, but ferocious barbarians, who immolated human victims, and exposed such of their new born infants as were feeble, or ill formed, to perish. The introduction of this usage, indeed, has been attributed by some to Lycurgus, ; but in all appearance it existed before his days, and extended even to far remoter times. These men, tormented in Doris by cold, hunger, and misery, among rocks almost continually covered with snow, were induced to seek a new country, and began to emigrate about eighty years after the siege of Troy; divided into several hordes, they obeyed different chiefs, called at times *Bagoi*, at others *Archagetes*, who, descending from some petty princes of Doris, had the vanity to trace their origin to Hercules. In a country, where all the inhabitants invented ridiculous and romantic genealogies, no person undertook to dispute the title of the Heraclidæ, who, fortunate in war, were consequently very noble; and their pedigree from Hercules could no more be doubted than those of Alcibiades, and Julius Cæsar, who pretended, the one to be the descendant of Jupiter, and the other of Venus.

From mount Oeta these emigrants marched directly

directly southwards; arrived at the gulf of Corinth, and passing in some canoes at Naupactus, they succeeded by dint of massacres and devastion to subdue great part of Peloponnesus, and particularly Laconia, which fell to the share of the most savage of all these barbarous hordes.

III.—MANNER IN WHICH LACONIA WAS TREATED AFTER THE CONQUEST BY THE SPARTANS.

At the approach of these merciless usurpers, who overturned the most flourishing states of Peloponnesus, great numbers of Achœans removed from Laconia; and the flight was almost general in the parts adjacent to Argolis and Arcadia. The inhabitants of Helos were too far south to escape in the same manner; and as their town, surrounded by marshes, was difficult to be approached, they made a long resistance; but, destitute of aid and resources, they were forced at last to submit to the yoke of their conquerors.

The inhabitants of the other towns of Laconia, who had not abandoned their dwellings, were declared tributaries: and deprived of all their privileges, as well as municipal rights, their influence in the civil government of Lacedæmon was infinitely less than that of the attic villages in the republic of Athens.*

* Isocrates, PANATH.

After having carried the right of conquest to such extremes, the Spartans took possession of the most fertile lands, and formed them into fiefs, which passed in hereditary succession to the eldest, and never to a younger son. No institutions, says a Greek politician, were ever more vicious, or better calculated to destroy all proportion between the faculties of citizens, because the families of the younger branches, possesing nothing, were evidently reduced to a state of indigence.

By another act equally inconsiderate, the women became capable of succeeding to these feodal portions; and in consequence of this, when Aristotle wrote, the greater part of the lands in Laconia belonged to females, called Epicleres, or universal heiresses of all the male branches extinct, through the fatal consequences of military government.*

Nothing is more chimerical than the pretended project, attributed to Lycurgus, of establishing a perfect equality of fortune among the Lacedæmonians. Such a purpose could never have been effected by a division of landed property in a mountainous country, where the ancient surveyors were incapable of forming two fields exactly equivalent; and many ages elapsed afterwards before geometers discovered that the produce of hilly grounds was not in proportion with their surface, but only with their horizontal dimensions. It is not

* Aristotle, POLITIC, lib. II.

a little

a little surprising to find the academy of sciences at Paris, in the middle of the eighteenth century, deciding on this problem, already solved in the work of Frontin, who wrote in the reign of Trajan.*

In the division of Laconia, as we have observed, the greatest injustice took place with regard to the lower class of people, who received portions of land on the sides of the high mountains, very barren, and difficult to be tilled, although, in geometrical extent they equalled the allotments of the nobles in the vale of the Eurotas.

Independant of all these considerations, the exactest distribution of lands can never establish equality of fortune among any people, or in any society whatever; because citizens, who have many children, are from that cause poorer than those, who have few or none. In this distribution of effects, the difficulty would be equally great from the impossibility of fixing the number of heirs, or foreseeing the many accidents, to which they are liable at all moments, from fire, loss of cattle, and disasters of every kind. Besides, it is easy to conceive that different degrees of intelligence, in the operations of agriculture and rural economy, are alone sufficient to enrich some, and

* *Quiquid de terra nascitur, in aerem rectum exit; et illam terræ obliquitatem crescendo atterit, nec majus spatium occupat, quam si de plano nascatur.* Frontin DE RE AGRARIA.

ruin others. These inconveniences cannot be remedied by the introduction of the right of primogeniture, because its very essence is destructive of all equality, and tends to reduce all the younger branches to beggary.

Since equality of fortune must therefore be considered among the number of projects, morally and physically impossible, it follows, that men who pretended to be philosophers, like Rousseau, or historians like Plutarch, have attributed views to Lycurgus, the absurdity of which is evident even to children.

Finally, it is notorious, that no proportion existed among the Lacedæmonians with regard to their landed property in the twenty-fourth Olympiad, about six hundred and eighty-four years before our Era; for, at that period, many citizens were reduced to such misery, that they excited a sedition, in order to procure a new divison of property. It was on this occasion that the poet Tyrtæus composed a poem, entitled *Eunomia*, or the good legislation; but this did not calm, as Pausanias pretends, the clamors of the discontented, who required quite another thing than an elegy.

It has been objected, and not without reason, to Mr. Mably, author of some very superficial works on the Greeks, that his suppositions, respecting Lycurgus and the Spartans, are destitute of even the appearance of truth.

truth.* This manner of writing, without having first acquired some knowledge of the subject, instead of being useful, retards greatly the progress of literature, by substituting chimeras for realities, and conjectures for facts.

The nature of political governments is judged, with most certainty from the effects they produce in the country where they are established. Wherever towns are seen successively falling into ruins, it may be concluded with safety, that the government is oppressive, and consequently unjust. Of this Laconia has furnished a striking example; for, so far from having flourished more under the domination of the Doric Spartans than under the ancient Achæans, it exhibited nothing more than a depopulated country, stained with blood, and covered with the ruins of its towns.

Such will ever be the fate of all governments purely military: they rise by making conquests, and fall as suddenly by losing them. This happened to Lacedæmon from a long train of events, the investigation of which will be sufficient to dispel many ancient and modern illusions.

IV.—CAUSSES OF THE GRANDEUR AND DECLINE OF THE LACEDÆMONIANS.

The general error of those who have written the history of Greece, consists in a false percep-

* *Examen historique & politique du gouvernement de Lacedemone, en reponse aux doutes proposes par* M. *de* Mably, *par* M. Vauvillier.

tion

tion of causes and effects. They always believed and asserted, that the power of the Lacedæmonians resulted only from the nature of their civil institutions and military exercises; while, on the contrary, they owed every thing to the augmentation of their forces from the conquest of Messenia. No sooner had Epaminondas, after the battle of Leuctra, deprived them of that country, than they were absolutely incapable of making any effectual resistance; and their annals, since that event, form one continual chain of terrible defeats and calamities.

Strabo knew better than all ancient authors the importance of Messenia, with regard to the balance of power in Greece. None of the provinces, says he, can be compared to this, either for goodness of pasturage, fertility of soil, or mildness of climate; for it was sheltered from the north and east winds by the mountains of Laconia and Arcadia. The surface of that beautiful country, stored with flocks, and rich in grain and vineyards, resembled one vast farm, if a few small cantons on the western coast are excepted. They were situated between the capes, called at this day, Gallo and Navarino, where the soil partook of sea sand, washed thither by the Mediterranean, during the frequent earthquakes.

Messenia was seperated from the territory of Lacedæmon by a chain of mountains; but the

interstices

interstices and defiles admitted a free communication between the two countries, and the valley of Pellane could be traversed without danger, even by an army.

The richness and fertility of this part of Greece irritated so much the insatiable covetousness of the Lacedæmonians, that they could not refrain from making incursions there, under different pretexts, until they came to an open rupture in the year seven hundred and forty four before our Era. This war terminated in the conquest of Messenia, which contained about an hundred square leagues. Thus the Lacedæmonians became masters of more territory in Greece than was possessed by Argos, Corinth, Sicyon, Megara, and Athens altogether. It is therefore nothing extraordinary, that with such a force, they were often capable of dictating the law to the small adjacent states; and those, who never attended to this, have little right to boast of their penetration.

All the events of the war of Messenia are too well known to be repeated here; but even then it was observable, that courage and military science were so entirely on the side of the Messenians, that the Spartans must infallibly have yielded, had they not found means of bribing Aristocrates, king of the Arcadians. That prince, who had been until then the ally of the inhabitants of Messenia, abandoned them in the midst of

of a decisive action, and exposed all the centre of their army to destruction.

By this signal treachery, the Lacedæmonians purchased the most ignominious victory that ever any Greek nation obtained over another.

The Arcadians, who were not informed of the transaction until its effects had operated, condemned their king Aristocrates to death; stoned him with their own hands; exterminated his family; left his carcase without burial; and erected a monument on the mount Lycæus, in the face of all Peloponnesus, to transmit to the latest posterity the remembrance of such abominable perfidy. No Lacedæmonian could read without blushing the inscription engraved there; and it has been transmitted to posterity by two authors without variation.*

The political arrangements of the conquerors in Messenia commenced by dismantling all the walled towns, except Methone and Asine; while all the inhabitants, who could not save themselves by flight, were reduced to slavery, although Dorians by origin, and in some measure brothers of the Lacedæmonians. They were compelled by an armed force to swear fidelity, as if an oath could be the effect of violence, which destroys all mutual contracts, and removes every obligation of fulfilling them.

After this formality, it was announced to the

* Polybius, *Hist.* lib. IV. and Pausanias in his *Messenics*.

Mes-

Messenians, that the half of the produce of their lands must be brought punctually every year to Lacedæmon; and besides tilling the ground, they had to perform military service, like the Helotes of Laconia, who were forced to furnish seven men, in time of war, for every one produced by the Spartans.

To add to so many humiliations a ceremony still more insulting, the conquered Messenians were constrained to repair in robes of sorrow to Lacedæmon, not only at the funerals of the kings, but likewise at those of the Ephori.*

Without excepting even the Tartars, Moguls, Turks, and Mandhuis of China, it is impossible to cite any conquerors, who ever imposed such an infamous yoke on any subjugated country of Europe, or Asia.

As long as the Spartans could employ, despotically, the combined forces of Messenia, they were formidable to all the states of Peloponnesus, none of which possessed any such powerful offensive or defensive means; as every politician must know, who is at all informed concerning the interests of Greece. The first step therefore of Epaminondas, after the battle of Leuctra, was to take possession, as we have said, of Messenia; after that rich province had groaned under an iron sceptre, during the lapse of two hundred and ninety-six years. Such was the real term of the

* *Collection of the Fragments of Tyrtæus*, by Mr. Clos.

power

power of the Lacedæmonians, who, previous to this acquisition, were a weak people; and no sooner was it re-conquered, than they returned to their former insignificance.

Thus the marvellous, which some people have wished to discover in their history, vanishes at the appearance of criticism; for all their vaunted discipline and military institutions would have been nothing, without a foreign and factitious force, founded on the conquest of an hundred square leagues of the most fertile soil in Greece; and in that confined country, such a space was a world. To this principal resource they had the art to add several others, which must be particularly treated, before we can form an exact idea of the genius and character of that people.

V.—RICHES OF LACEDÆMON, AND COVETOUSNESS OF THE SPARTANS.

Plato asserted, that the town of Lacedæmon contained alone more gold and silver than all the rest of Greece; and to demonstrate this, it will be sufficient to indicate the astonishing means they practised, in heaping up treasures, to be employed as badly as they were acquired.

In the first place, they doubled the ransom of prisoners, and required for each man taken in

in arms, the sum of two hundred drachmæ of Egina; for by this standard, heavier than that of Athens, they regulated all the operations of their finances.*

In the other states of Greece, where humanity and moderation were more respected, the ransom of a private soldier did not exceed an hundred attic drachmæ; and this proportion, according to Aristotle, was generally established, and regularly observed.†

Thus the Lacedæmonians demanded more than double the sum paid to other military powers; and as they were constantly in war, the price of prisoners alone must have produced immense sums, exclusive of the booty heaped together, during their expeditions by land and sea, in the greater part of the then known world.

Particular commissaries were appointed by them, for the sole purpose of selling to the highest bidders the spoils taken in the course of their campaigns.‡

Three hundred inspectors followed their armies, for the purpose of observing the most favorable moment to attack the baggage; and they gave the signal for pillage, whenever the

* Herodotus, lib. VI. The drachma of Egina was equal to about six pence halfpenny.

† Ethic. lib. V.

‡ Cragius, *de Republica Lacedæmon.*

enemy

enemy appeared in such disorder as to be incapable of rallying, or making resistance.*

Xenophon speaks in his Hellenica of the general devastation of Elis, where Agis, king of Lacedæmon, says he, became master of so many slaves and cattle, that, when sold throughout Peloponnesus, they overstocked the whole country. Yet we have already had occasion to observe, that the spoils of Attica were still more productive to the Spartans than even those of Elis.

Besides what was taken in war, the Lacedæmonians received annually half the revenues of Messenia, a part of which country formed a particular domain for their kings; and the contingents of the tributary towns of Laconia, Cythera, and the conquered places in Thrace, were considerable. Herodotus and Thucydides speak of them as a people, who made a constant use of gold and silver for the vilest purposes, in the same manner, that they had anciently seduced the Arcadian Aristocrates, into the most execrable perfidy.

In the deliberations relative to the war of Peloponnesus, and the manner of attacking the republic of Athens with the greatest vigor, king Archidamus declared openly to the council of Lacedæmon, in the presence of the deputies of his allies, *that money was the chief sinew of war.*†

§ Eustathius on the Iliad, lib. VI.

† Discourse of king Archidamus in Thucydides, lib. I.

This

This axiom has since been preferred to all others by pretended politicians; and Machiavel, who acquired many of his ideas from studying the history of Sparta, asserts, in his commentaries on Titus Livius, that, unless in some very particular cases, no exceptions can be alledged against this great principle, developed in so few words by the genius of the Lacedæmonians. After the battle of Platææ, that nation did not fail to seize on the tenth part of the spoils found in the Persian camp, which consisted of precious metals and jewels, employed by the Asiatics in ornamenting not only their swords and poignards, but even the very harness of their horses.

The Spartan Pausanias, who commanded in that action the troops of his country, disgraced soon afterwards his name and memory, by selling himself and the safety of all Greece to the emperor Xerxes. For this treachery he received from that prince the prodigious sum of five hundred talents of gold, which he brought to Lacedæmon, where not only the wealth of Greece, says Plato, but even the riches of barbarous nations were collected by the most extraordinary means ever employed among mankind.*

As soon as the Persians were expelled from the continent of Europe, the Spartans began to as-

* Chrysermus, *History of Persia*, cited by Stobæus: Plutarch's *Comparison of the Greeks and Romans*, and Cornelius Nepos, *Life of Pausanias*.

sume a tone of superiority, very alarming to several small republics. Nothing however was more insupportable than the insolent inscriptions engraved by them on their trophies, where they did not deign even to name such auxiliary troops as had most distinguished themselves in repulsing the common enemy. The inhabitants of the town of Platææ, who found their honor wounded by this injurious silence, cited the Lacedæmonians before the tribunal of the states general of Greece, and demanded a fine of a thousand talents, or near two hundred thousand pounds sterling.*

This conduct of the Platæans proves sufficiently the error of those, who imagine that the Lacedæmonians then possessed no other than iron money. The contrary must be evident from the spoils they had taken from the Persians; and it would have been absurd to condemn them to pay two hundred thousand pounds, if that sum was not in their possession.

It is easy to conceive, that, without some coin equivalent to the money in circulation; no people of Greece could have remained in the Amphictyonic confederation; and besides all commerce, as well as political connexion with other nations, must have been impracticable. The Spartans necessarily furnished, either in gold or silver, their contingent for the common treasury established at Delos, and likewise to that of

* Demosthenes, *against Neæra.*

the

the Amphictyons in the temple of Apollo at Delphi. Had they deposited there nothing but pieces of iron, they must soon have been excluded from the general association. Neither would such money have served to pay auxiliary soldiers; and ever since the ninth Olympiad, Lacedæmon employed a corps of Cretan archers, who, during the war of Messenia, were opposed to the light troops of the enemy.*

Mr. Pelerin, to whom we are indebted for a work more voluminous than instructive on the medals of the Grecian cities, renews ancient prejudices, or rather palpable errors, by supposing that Lysander was the first who introduced the use of gold and silver at Lacedæmon. The numerous facts we have exhibited prove incontestibly, that several centuries before the birth of Lysander, every species of money, coined in Europe and Asia, was current among the Spartans; nor is any circumstance of ancient history better attested than this.

By the confession of Mr. Pelerin, and of all those who are versed in Grecian numismatography, it appears that a great number of medals in silver and brass were fabricated at Lacedæmon. If the gold coins of that town are not equally well known at this day, we find those of Athens also very rare; and the reason assigned for this, in the article on the finances of the Athe-

* Pausanias, MESSEN.

nians, will satisfy those who wish to examine it with attention.

What has been observed, concerning the uncommon weight of several ancient coins of Lacedæmon, discovers the great ignorance of those who have regarded this as unexampled among other nations. The Romans had a copper money still heavier, which they called *æs grave*; and Titus Livius assures us, that a chariot was necessary to transport very moderate sums, before either gold or silver was coined at Rome. Such must also have been the case at Lacedæmon in very ancient times, as well as through all Peloponnesus, where copper was of still less value than iron.

With respect to covetousness, it is totally indifferent what metal is employed to represent the value of articles, either bought or sold; for whatever may be the essence or nature of the objects which avarice desires to accumulate, its thirst is neither less ardent, nor less fatal.

As the heavy money of the ancient Romans did not change in them the ordinary course of human passions, that of the Lacedæmonians, we are to suppose, must have been equally ineffectual.

Mr. de Gourcy has reasoned on all these matters, without knowing even the state of the question; and in his production, which was

crowned

crowned by the academy of Paris, not only facts but even dates are totally confounded. Little penetration would have been necessary to perceive, that in the days of Lycurgus, neither gold nor silver coins were known in any part of Greece; and consequently we cannot suppose laws to have been made for what did not exist, nor could even be foreseen.*

In all cases where it was shameful to give or receive money, the Lacedæmonians never interrupted such negotiations by their scruples and Pausanias avows openly, that they were the first of the Greeks who rendered victories venal. It was to this they were indebted for the conquest of Messenia; and they terminated by the same influence the war of Peloponnesus.

The great advantages they then obtained, ought not to be attributed, says Cornelius Nepos; either to the valour of their soldiers, or to force of arms, but to such means as are invisible to an historian.† This signifies, in other words, that the Lacedæmonian Lysander, the most audacious seducer, ever known in Greece, had found means to bribe the admirals of Athens, who sold their fleet at Ægos potamos,

* Mr. Heyne in his *Commentaries on the Epochs of Castor*, observes, that the origin of money among the Greeks did not go farther back than forty years before the institution of the Olympiads, or about a century after the death of Lycurgus.

† *Life of Lysander.*

in the same execrable manner that Aristocrates had disposed of the conquest of Messenia.

The five great annual magistrates, called at Lacedæmon Ephori, says Aristotle, are venal men, destitute of every sentiment of honor;* yet all the crimes and misdemeanors, proceeding from their avarice, have not been handed down to posterity, and many circumstances are buried for ever between the Eurotas and mount Taygetus. One mystery, however, could not be concealed, and it was published to the universe by Alexander, in his manifesto against the emperor Darius: *You have sent emissaries into Greece,* said he, *loaded with gold and silver, to excite enemies every where against the court of Macedonia; but none of the states would receive your bribes, except the Lacedæmonians.*†

Those ancient politicians were perfectly right, who maintained that no court of Asia was conducted by more contradictory principles and absurd maxims than that of Persia; for it lost entirely all the sums delivered to the Lacedæmonians, who never made any other return than ingratitude. It is positively known, that during the Peloponnesian war, they received from the Persians more than five thousand talents, or eight hundred and fifty thousand pounds sterling.

* He gives the Ephori the name of ωνιοι, which corresponds exactly with our word *venal*.

† Arrian, *on the expedition of Alexander.*

ling.* Notwithstanding this enormous subsidy, their arms were turned against Persia, as soon as they had conquered the Athenians, which they effected by an operation of finance, more than by force of arms. Lysander, who disposed at that time of the treasures of the younger Cyrus, adopted the policy of doubling the pay of the soldiers and sailors. Athens, to prevent desertion, was necessarily obliged to follow the example, which exhausted all the treasures of the state, because the expences of the war were doubled, and military pay at three oboli daily was augmented to seven pence halfpenny. If a prince existed in Europe at this time, sufficiently opulent to allow his soldiers the double of what they receive in other places, it would necessarily happen, that either the greater part of the neighbouring armies would desert, or the different states must ruin themselves by augmenting their pay. What no power in Europe is now capable of attempting, was undertaken by the Lacedæmonians two thousand years ago, and executed with success.

As national avarice, like that of individuals, increases with years, Sparta following the same progression, grew every day more covetous, more deaf to glory, and more blind to the nature of its means. During the holy war, that

* Isocrates, in the oration termed ΣΥΜΜΑΧΙΚΟΣ.

government was accessary to the sacrilegious pillage of the temple of Apollo, and received likewise a considerable part of the treasures of Delphi.* Infamous actions of this nature occasioned at last the degradation of Sparta; the deputies of that nation were declared incapable of assisting at the assembly of the states general, and the name of their country was effaced from the amphictyonic confederation.

The Lacedæmonians were branded by the Greeks with the epithet of *aischrocerdeis*, or men covetous of sordid gain, who observed among themselves as little good faith, in transactions of interest, as with strangers.

The disorder, now so general in the administration of their finances, proceeds, says Aristotle, from the cunning they employ in defrauding the public treasury of the sums it should receive.† As the five Ephori alone had the power of ordering any person to be arrested, it is easy to conceive, that those magistrates, whose venality was known, allowed themselves to be corrupted by the rich proprietors; and thus the whole burden of imposts, thrown on the lower classes of people, reduced them to beggary. Plutarch assures us, that under the reign of the latter Agis not more than one hundred citizens at Lacedæmon possessed landed estates, while all

* Diodorus Siculus. lib. XVI.

† Politic. lib. II.

the rest were not only destitute of every kind of property, had but besides enormous debts to increase their misery.*

In this chain of abuses we perceive the same disorders which broke out in the middle of Europe, when several great vassals would neither acquit themselves of military service, nor pay any taxes, under pretence that noble possessions were exempt from all such demands. By the rigorous law, then issued by Charlemain, it appears that the sovereign authority was far from sanctioning such injustice in any province of France. It is truly surprising, that this law, the most useful and salutary of all those we have received from barbarous times, should be precisely that which has been most eluded during an enlightened age.†

When the lands of Laconia were divided among the Dorian conquerors, each portion obliged the possessor to serve in the armies with a certain number of serfs or Helotes. But in time the women on one side, and the great proprietors on the other, became possessed of so many shares that the state was deprived both of military service and imposts. Thus the whole burden fell on the tributary Laconians, who made incessant efforts to shake off the yoke of the Lacedæmonians; and

* *Life of Agis and of Cleomenes.*

† *Laws of Charlemain*; by Georgisch,

this

this dissolution of the body politic took place, as we shall see hereafter, under the reign of Nabis.

Several authors have spoken of what they call the law of Epitades, without ever understanding its spirit. We have already observed, that the lands of the Spartans, like fiefs in general, were at first indivisible and inalienable, passing exclusively from the father to the eldest son, while the younger branches were often reduced to indigence. Epitades, through fear that this inconvenience would become insupportable, endeavoured to stop its progress, by allowing parents to dispose of property either by will or donation among all their children.

By this he diminished the rigor of birth-right, which, founded alone on fortuitous circumstances, appears incompatible with all notions of national equity. Having done nothing contrary to the interest of the citizen, it was not the fault of Epitades if the women became possessed of more than half the lands in Laconia. The institutions of this state contained so many defects, that frequently an attempt to correct one occasioned an hundred others.

VI.—MILITARY EXPLOITS OF THE LACEDÆMONIANS.

By a general enumeration of all the combats, more or less decisive, in which the Lacedæmonians

nians were engaged during many centuries, it appears, that they lost as many as they gained, without counting some flights occasioned by panic, or the treason of their generals. Among other extraordinary events of this nature was the defeat of the phalanx by the women of Arcadia, at the foot of mount Philactrus, and the repulse of their army by the women of Argos. To commemorate this, solemn feasts and public games were celebrated there annually, under the name of TELESILLÆA. It was Telesillæa who first encouraged her companions to take arms; and inspired by the god of poesy, as well as the god of war, she composed verses, and spread consternation among the Spartans, who endeavoured to diminish their disgrace by pretending that their king Cleomenes, corrupted by money, had not attacked Argos with vigor. Accusations of that nature were so frequent at Lacedæmon, that the greater part of the kings, who reigned there, were suspected, and very often convicted of having engaged privately in pecuniary negociations with the enemy. Leotychides, one of the sovereigns of Sparta, was surprised in the act of receiving a bribe from the Thessalians, to execute a precipitate retreat; and Pericles employed similar means, fourteen years before the Peloponnesian war, to engage Plistoanax, son of Pausanias, to evacuate the territory of Attica.*

* Herodotus, lib. VI. Thucydides, lib. II. and Meursius *de regno Laconum*.

When

When the Greek writers, guided by their enthusiasm and national vanity, made use of continual exaggerations, they did not suppose that posterity would discover such an art as historical criticism, to tear away from truth the veil of fiction. It is easy by this method to estimate justly the exploit of the three hundred Spartans against the Persian army at the straits of Thermopylæ. In the first place, it is impossible that ever any combat, such as historians have described, could have taken place there, because the defile was then closed by a very solid wall, extending from the foot of the mountains to the sea. The Lacedæmonians, placed to the south of this rampart, so far from being able to attack, were prevented by their own works from even discovering the enemy towards the north; and the position they had chosen was contrary to all the rules of war then in practice. The Persians having detached a body of troops by some neglected paths on mount Oeta, hemmed them in so completely, that they could not escape; and as Titus Livius observes very judiciously, their death was by far more memorable than their combat.* In fact the whole of that affair was

* *Morte magis, quam pugna memorabili.* Herodotus says, that the wall of Thermopylæ had been originally intended to prevent the Thessalian cavalry from making incursions into Phocis; and at the approach of the Persians it received some additional fortifications.

nothing

nothing more than the massacre of some men, whose lives were thrown away without any utility either to their own state, or the rest of Greece.

The same fault was afterwards committed in that very place by king Antiochus, who encountered a most signal defeat from the Romans. That prince likewise constructed an insurmountable wall, without thinking of the other passes, through which Cato found means to penetrate, as the Persians had done when they exterminated Leonidas. It was certainly the greatest imprudence on the part of the Lacedæmonians, and likewise of Antiochus, to occupy such a confined post, without having fortified all the other passages through which an enemy could fall on their flank and rear, as they experienced successively.

When the aid of geography is joined with history to clear up the circumstances of that fact, it appears no longer in the class of marvellous events, but enters into the order of things most common and natural.

Plato, who had the misfortune to be taken by the pirates of the Mediterranean, and was sold by them like a beast of burden, preserved ever after a great horror for every thing naval. He speaks with the greatest contempt of sea victories, and considers the battle of Salamis as greatly inferior in glory to that of Platææ. Yet the

Lacedæmonians

Lacedæmonians, he confesses lost courage there, and were thrown into such disorder, that if the troops of Athens had not maintained the combat, they could never have been rallied; and before they did return to the charge, the great danger was over. The whole nation was generally supposed to partake of the character of those individuals, called in Greek, *Thrasydiles*. This word, composed of two very opposite significations, had been invented by the grammarians to denote men who discover great timidity in imminent danger, and no less audacity in ambuscades or stratagems. Aristotle observes, that the portrait of Ulysses, such as it is drawn in the Odyssey, exhibits the true model of the Thrasydiles. But the chief of all were at Lacedæmon, where the generals, who had vanquished the enemy by force of arms, could only sacrifice a cock after their victory, while an ox was immolated by those, who triumphed by fraud or cunning.*

Tyrtæus the poet, perfectly acquainted with the genius of the Lacedæmonians, took all imaginable pains to inspire them with what he called true courage, instead of the timid boldness of Ulysses. But the lessons of Tyrtæus degenerated, on the other hand, into principles more calculated to form beasts of prey, than heroes; for he speaks only of gnash-

* Plato, in the Dialogue entitled *Larhes, or on Bravery:* and Plutarch, in his *Laconic Institutions*.

ing

ing of teeth, stabs of lances, deluges of blood, and a thousand deaths, rather than one step backwards.* Such murderous verses would have been useless among the Athenians, whose bravery required to be calmed, instead of being excited, and Pericles observed, that with them a spur was less necessary than a curb.

The Lacedæmonians, accustomed to make war in a mountainous country, had acquired great experience in the art of encamping, marching, and forming ambuscades; but they were too ignorant in sciences and mathematics, to be capable of inventing, or improving the machines necessary for attacking fortified places. Their greatest captains never conducted the operations of a siege according to rule; and they pretended, that a positive law forbade them to make an assault; but, in realty, they never knew how to effect a breach.

They besieged the little town of Platææ on the confines of Attica during two years, and they blocked the Messenians for eleven years on mount Ira, and afterwards for ten years on mount Ithome. These indisputable facts diminish greatly the absurdities which some people have imagined to observe in the operations of the conquerors of Troy, who in fact carried on nothing more than a blockade, supported by skirmishes

* Poems of Tyrtæus, cited by the orator Lycurgus, and Stobæus.

and

and duels, rather than by battles. But if we are led to pardon excessive ignorance in the heroes of the Iliad, on account of the disadvantages they had to experience in those days, it is impossible to be equally indulgent to the Lacedæmonians. By neglecting the sciences and arts, they could never attain completely the object of their pursuit; and from want of knowledge in conducting sieges, they cannot be considered as a people truly military. Accustomed from their infancy to the use of small weapons, they understood perfectly the minutest evolutions of the phalanx; but the great and complicated principles of that ordinance had totally escaped their sagacity. Their deficiency in this point is so evident, that they never engaged in a pitched battle with the Macedonians under Antipater, Antigonus, Pyrrhus, and Philip, son of Demetrius, without being totally defeated.

We must not believe, that the generals of the Lacedæmonians were always possessed of great military talents; for Cleombrotus, at the battle of Leuctra, acted contrary to all the rules of his profession. He formed his army only twelve men deep, although he had been told, that the centre of the Thebans was augmented to fifty men in depth; and the impression of such superior force must have been irresistable. To this fault Cleombrotus added another, by commencing the action with his cavalry, although the

the wretched state of that body of men was known to all Greece, and their defeat spread dismay among the infantry.*

We will now terminate this article by some observation relative to the dress of Laconia, and the armour of the Spartans, who were distinguished in these points from all the other Greeks of Europe and Asia. Their hair, in all its natural length, was divided into two or three tresses, hanging on the shoulders, which, added to their bushy whiskers, made them resemble equally the modern Tartars, and the ancient Suevi. Instead of the long cloak of the Athenians, they covered their tunica with a very short cassock, called *tribon:* which in time of war was of a red colour, but always so dirty and ragged, that Aristotle calls it the covering of pride. After the tyrant Nabis had introduced a new form of government, and dispelled even the shadow of civil liberty, the Lacedæmonians began to distinguish themselves by a luxury in dress, ever inseperable from the progress of slavery; and then their presumption was transformed into meanness.†

Cleomenes imagined, that the inferiority of the Laconian phalanx to that of Macedonia, consisted solely in the difference of armour, and he therefore reformed every thing from the

* Xenophon's HELLENICA, lib. VI.

† Clemens of Alexandria, Pædogog, lib. III.

sword to the buckler. Anciently the common weapon at Lacedæmon was the half-pike, used with one hand; and this emblem principally characterized the capital of Laconia, which had the epithet of *dory-stephanos*, or crowned with javelins. However terrible this instrument might have been, when handled with dexterity, it could never be appropriated to all the evolutions of the phalanx; for when that body was concentred to fight in very close order, those short pikes became totally useless to the centre ranks. The Macedonians, on the contrary, employed lances, or sarisses, sixteen cubits or twenty four feet in length; and when managed with force, they became a kind of battering engine almost irresistible.*

This long sarisse was substituted by Cleomenes for the ancient armour of the Lacedæmonian troops; but experience proved the danger of changing suddenly the tactics of a nation, without many combinations, which were incompatible with the fiery temper of that pretended reformer.

The Spartans, accustomed from time immemorial to the use of short arms, could not manage the sarisse, to wield which the soldier not only required both hands, but even the aid of his companions in the ranks behind him. At the battle of Sellasia, Cleomenes made a trial of

* Ælians' TACTICS: and Polyænus, STRATAG, lib. II.

his

of his new method; and that action terminated in the total defeat of his army. The massacre was so great, the disorder so complete, and the flight so general, that no corps either of cavalry or infantry could be rallied: all were overthrown; every thing was lost; while streams of blood flowed from the heights of Sellasia, and mixed with the streams of the Eurotas. Thus a nation, ignorant of every trade, except that of war, was at length exterminated, and buried in the abyss it had so long been preparing for others.

VII.—EMPIRE OF THE SEA.

In speaking of the maritime commerce of Greece, we have already had occasion to observe, that every nation, aspiring in those days to the empire of the sea, was drawn successively into great disasters, and endless calamities. But no people encountered in this perilous carreer a more dreadful catastrophe than the Lacedæmonians, who pretended also, at one time, to exercise a despotic sway on the whole of the Mediterranean. Alcibiades conducted them to their ruin by an insidious policy, when he advised the kings and ephori, as well as the people in general, to augment their marine; to force all other nations to lower their flag before theirs;

and to erect themselves into Thalassocratores, or exclusive sovereigns of the seas of Greece.*

Alcibiades could not have given to such men more fatal counsels; for the Spartans were already universally hated from their attempts to reign on the continent; and they made themselves detested by endeavouring to become the tyrants of the sea. While they directed all their efforts to equip vessels, and acquire dexterity in rowing, they neglected entirely their cavalry, which, according to Xenophon, consisted chiefly of old horses, enervated by the Olympic races, or other such excesses.

Although no comparison can be made between the naval force of those times and that of the present day, yet even then it was attended with very considerable expence, particularly for the small republics. Demosthenes declares, that with the most rigorous economy, the light vessels could not be kept in commission for less than forty talents, or eight thousand pounds annually.† From this we may infer, that the equipment of large galleys, capable of being placed in a line of battle, must have cost near twice that sum; and the Lacedæmonians, by a fatal speculation, determined to spare from their

* Isocrates, *Harangue to Philip of Macedon.* Before the arrival of Alcibiades at Lacedæmon, the Spartans possessed a navy, but afterwards they continued to augment it daily.

† Demosthenes, *Philippic.* I.

cavalry

cavalry a part of the expence necessary for their navy.

Isocrates pretends, that their decisive defeat at Leuctra was a consequence of their having lost the battle of Gnidus, where the Athenian Conon destroyed the whole of their fleet and naval forces. Such events have certainly a very natural connexion; for when the Thebans were informed that the Lacedæmonians had lost the empire of the sea, their hopes and courage augmented greatly. When a state has received one great check, it is always very probable that another will soon follow, because the first weakness leads to a second; and as consternation naturally augments, we may conclude that the victory of Conon had greatly dispirited the republic of Sparta.

The Athenians were in some measure pardonable for having directed all their genius and efforts to possess a fleet, because they inhabited a barren country, where it was impossible to subsist without commerce, and the importation of foreign grain. Thus navagation was with them absolutely necessary, and we cannot consider what has been advanced by Plato to the contrary, otherwise than as a series of illusions. But none of these considerations influenced the Lacedæmonians, at least as long as they kept possession of Messenia, where they could always

obtain a sufficiency of food for the nation, without requiring any foreign assistance.

Some authors pretend that Lycurgus had positively prohibited the Spartans from building vessels, or employing sailors.* It is not however at all likely that any person would think of making a law of that nature, in a country like Laconia, containing at least fifty maritime towns, which must have become desert, had they been prevented from pursuing their fisheries, and extending their commerce to Asia, Africa, and Sicily.

The Greeks had such a passion for traffic and maritime adventures, that already in the most ancient times, like the inhabitants of the islands in the South Seas at this day, they were constantly employed in forming canoes and pirogues, to pass between the continent and the iflands of the Archipelago, as merchants, pirates, or adventurers. No sooner had they fixed a piece of canvass to a mast, than they began to speak of the empire of the sea. The Cretans were the first, it is said, who acquired this sovereignty, which ruined them so entirely, that incapable of defending their coasts, they could scarcely, by collecting all their forces, preserve some principal forts from falling into the hands of the enemy. All this calamity proceeded, as we have already observed, from the universal ani-

* Cragius, de Repub. Lacedæmon, lib. III.

mosity,

mosity, which is constantly excited against every nation pretending to the empire of the sea.*

Independant of these considerations, the supposed law of Lycurgus, relative to naval matters, is contradicted, among other numerous facts, by the certainty that the Lacedæmonians had always armed vessels during their wars; and in the days of Crœsus, they disembarked some troops in the island of Samos, where they had been attracted by the desire of plunder. It is generally believed, says Herodotus, that the tyrant Polycrates prevailed on them to depart suddenly, by offering a prodigious sum of what appeared good money: but, when examined by the assayers of Lacedæmon, it was found to consist of nothing more than pieces of lead, or tin, covered with a leaf of gold, like those medals which are found in all the cabinets of the antiquaries. That expedition was worthy of the Spartans; and such a trick was no less consistent with the character of the tyrant Polycrates.

* Pausanias, Laconics.

END OF THE NINTH SECTION.

SECT. X.

MANNERS OF THE LACEDÆMONIANS.

I.—WOMEN OF SPARTA.

Among military nations, the morals of the women must necessarily be very corrupt; and this cause more, than any other, accelerates the ruin of all societies founded on force, and maintained by violence. In considering the miserable debasement of those women who now follow armies, we perceive what terrible chastisement nature has destined for a profession so contrary to its views, as well as to all notions of reason. It is very inconsistent in you, said other nations to the Spartans, to marry to-day, and go to-morrow either amidst battles, or to assist during ten years at a blockade, equally productive of fatal consequences with the siege of Troy. All the Greeks, who returned from that expedition, found their families ruined by parasite lovers, or thrown into the utmost disorder by the infidelity of wives, who, under pretence that their husbands were fallen in war, had sought other marriages.

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It is equally surprising and true, that the women of military states are exceedingly fearful, and more cowardly than those of pacific nations. When we read what the Greeks have written of the virgins of Lacedæmon, who, according to them, entered the lists naked with the men in the gymnasia, and along the banks of the Eurotas, we are led to believe that they must have acquired by such rude exercises great fortitude of mind, and amazing courage. But no nation of the world, in fact, ever produced women more timid and pusillanimous than those of Lacedæmon. They could not, says Xenophon, support the sight of the smoke arising from some farm-houses destroyed by the troops of Epaminondas, after the battle of Leuctra; but when his army advanced towards the city, the women were struck with such terror, that their cries and lamentations threw every thing into the greatest confusion. Soldiers no longer heard the voice of the officers, nor officers the orders of the generals; and it was impossible to open a passage in the streets through the crowd of persons, who, distracted with consternation, neither knew whence they came, nor whither to fly. Finally, on that day, says Aristotle, the women of Lacedæmon occasioned the greatest danger, and were absolutely near causing the city to fall into the hands of the enemy.*

* Xenophon, *Hellenica*. lib. VI. Aristotle's *Politics*. lib. II. and Plutarch, *Life of Agesilaus*.

It

It was, therefore, in vain that they had been exercised, as is pretended, in boxing, if even the shadow of courage abandoned them at the moment when they should have discovered some resignation. The women of Carthage, and some other places, who saw their towns on the point of being taken by assault, or destroyed by fire, behaved in a very different manner.

Philarchus and Hieronymus of Cardia, two historians very much in disrepute among the ancients for their bad faith, and their inveteracy against Pyrrhus, in order to tarnish the reputation of this prince, have asserted, that he had been repulsed by the virgins of Sparta. But the truth is, that when Pyrrhus appeared before the town, it was already so strongly fortified with ramparts, towers, and ditches, that it could not be taken by surprise, nor besieged with prudence.

None of the writers, who have mentioned that the virgins appeared naked at the gymnasia, ever pretended to assert this from their own knowledge; and as the circumstance appears almost incredible, it is necessary to explain their assertion one way or another.

At Athens a man was said to be naked, when he had quitted his cloak, although he continued to wear his tunic; and as this manner of speaking was very common throughout Greece, a woman might probably be said to be naked, when

when she appeared in a robe, without wearing the veil, called *peplos*. The latter was so essential a part of dress with the Grecian dames of distinction, that they wore it in all public places at Argos, Athens, and Thebes; while the virgins of Lacedæmon, during the excessive heat at the foot of mount Taygetus, frequently threw aside their veils to exercise themselves in running and dancing on the banks of the Eurotas. In this situation a part of the breast remained uncovered, as well as the legs and arms; but it was far from that state of absolute nakedness, imagined by Propertius in an elegy, and by Plutarch in that romance, called the Life of Lycurgus.

In a country so irregular as Laconia, covered with thick woods and steep rocks, nothing could have been more inconvenient than long garments. It is not, therefore, extraordinary that the women, who were frequently employed in the chace, should adopt, amidst a military people, a species of clothing very immodest in the eyes of the other Greeks, who were accustomed to the floating drapery of the peplos.

A more exact idea cannot be formed of the virgins of Laconia, than by observing some ancient statues of Atalanta or Diana. Their robes, adapted to a mountainous country, did not flatter the shape; for the folds of the tunic, lying so thick on the hips, rendered those parts enormously

mously

mously bulky.* From the same cause the women of Melos appear aukward and disagreeable to strangers at first sight; and yet they cannot properly be called phenomerides, although this epithet was given to those of Sparta, because they were not covered to the knee.

It is very probable, that anciently a great difference could be observed between the Achæan women, who inhabited the towns, and those of the Doric race, employed in hunting, with exactly such bows and arrows as were used in Crete. Besides, the climate in that country, extending beyond the thirty-seventh degree of latitude, had a very considerable influence on the complexion of the inhabitants. This is still remarkable in the Mainots, called Cacovougnis or banditti of the mountain, who, exposed to the impressions of the air on the high rocks of Cape Tenarus, appear very tawny in comparison with the Turkish families, inhabiting the more shady country around Misitra.

The Greek nations anciently reproached each other with having never been able to succeed in reducing their institutions, relative to the female sex, to any exact form; and this, in fact, was the rock which occasioned more or less the wreck of their legislators. Those people, says Aristotle, who do not understand how to govern women,

* Philostratus, *Icon.* and Callimachus, *Hymn to Diana.*

lose from that instant the half of their happiness;* and, according to him, no nation in the then known world was more defective in that point than the Lacedæmonians, who experienced a disaster, which proves but too clearly, that their morals had already been lost for many ages.

Ever since the war of Messenia, the greater part of the Lacedæmonian virgins became mothers before marriage; and a new race of men, whose fathers were unknown, sprang up in the midst of the state. These were the children of the earth, called afterwards *Partheniæ*, a term denoting those alone who were born of unmarried women. Strabo and Justin indeed accuse the Spartan government with having been accessary to this depravity, by encouraging the most vigorous soldiers of the army to ravish the virgins. This aspersion falls to the ground from the certainty that no such means were ever employed to augment population, for the Partheniæ, disowned as children, were likewise abandoned by the state; and having been forced at last to emigrate, they founded a colony at Tarentum, about the year seven hundred and seven before our Era.†

The Tarentines, descendants of that illegitimate race, fell afterwards into as great disorder as the Lacedæmonians, by governing their fami-

* *Rhetoric.* lib. I. *Politic.* lib. II.

‡ *Collection of Academical Dissertations*, by Mr. Heyne.

lies

lies with the same negligence. Cornelius Nepos pretends, that among them widows of the highest nobility dared to appear on the theatre for money, and represent indelicate farces in the same attitudes that the virgins formed the choir and the dance under the plane-trees of Amycles. No taste however was displayed in any of their theatrical representations; and Plutarch asserts that they never performed any thing regular, either in comedy or tragedy. Amusements of that kind were nothing more than farces, and buffoon operas, where the chief merit consisted in imitating the gestures and language of mountebanks, felons, stealers of fruit, and all other persons either mean or disgraceful.*

It is possible that the women of Lacedæmon, as little scrupulous in their methods of acquiring money as the men, might have undertaken the performance of these dramas, which did not even require to be committed to memory. Athenæus informs us, that they were trivial dialogues without either order or connexion, and the name of *Dicelistes* was given to the actors, who formed the lowest of all theatrical classes; but the Lacedæmonians were too unpolished to admit any thing more ingenious or regular.

Some modern critics, who could not combine their own ideas with those of Cornelius Nepos, have pretended that the text has been entirely

* Meursius, *Miscell. Laconia.* lib. III.

changed

changed in the passage we have quoted. What he mentions, they suppose, does not concern any part of the comic scene, but only alludes to particular feasts given by the middle order of citizens, who, affecting an appearance of grandeur, engaged the most illustrious matrons and widows to come and honor them with their presence.* Even admitting this strange opinion to be ascertained, a custom so sordid wounds all received notions of hospitality, and banishes that freedom with which it ought to be accompanied. On such occasions a perfect equality should reign among the guests; and the Gothic ceremonies, preserved at the repasts of several European nations, are nothing more than the remains of barbarism.

Aristotle, the least enthusiastic of all the Greeks, and who knew the essential defects of the Lacedæmonian government better than any other politician, affirms that incredible disorders took place in the interior of families, left at the discretion of women, while the men were absent on military expeditions. But this evil, as ancient as the state, became infinitely more fatal, when Lacedæmon aiming at the empire of the sea had to maintain wars in Asia and Africa. Citizens

* These critics read the text of Cornelius Nepos in this manner: *Nulla Lacedæmoni tam nobilis vidua est, quæ non ad cœnam eat mercede conducta.* They have also discovered another passage in some ancient manuscript which does not seem to be of any great authority.

were

were then often prevented from visiting their houses for many years; and when they did return, their situation was not preferable to that of the heroes of the Iliad, the greatness of whose trophies could not compensate for the ruin of their domestic affairs.

As the queens of Sparta contrived to elude the vigilance of the ephori, who were their guardians, and to erect thousands of altars to Venus in the town of Mars, it is easy to judge how little importance must have been attached by the vulgar to what was improperly called, the conjugal union.

All the particular circumstances of excessive dissoluteness in the Lacedæmonian women may be deduced from two general causes.

In the first place, they received no education suitable either to a state of virginity, or of marriage; and mothers could never inculcate those moral duties to their children, of which they themselves were ignorant.

All the passions exercised immediately a tyrannical empire on minds, neither tempered by the reserve of modesty, nor the moderation of wisdom. They were therefore distinguished universally in Greece by the epithet *Andromanes*, because the passion of love, already terrible, degenerated with them into madness, the last term of human weakness.

The Lacedæmonians, who were without

doubt the most ignorant men on earth of the causes and effects of nature, depended on foreign mountebanks to calm the transports of their wives, either by drugs, or expiatory sacrifices; and they had the simplicity to believe, that the impostor Bacis succeeded at least in one cure truly difficult.*

The Grecian women, from the causes already mentioned, experienced perturbations capable of terrifying the human mind. I dare avow, says Galen, in the face of the universe, that I had conceived a mortal hatred for my own mother, who in fits of fury seized the slaves with her teeth, like a beast of prey, until the blood streamed from her mouth. Yet the mother of Galen belonged to one of the most distinguished families in Greece, and must be supposed to have received at least something of education, while in that point the women of Lacedæmon were totally neglected. As such we certainly cannot consider an exercise so much reprobated as wrestling, or so barbarous as the chase, which renders the heart atrocious, and is nothing better than the trade of a butcher. No difference surely can be imagined between butchering calves, and slaughtering hinds in the forests of Enoras, at the foot of mount Taygetus, which, during the Bacchanalia, resounded with the cries of virgins, and the howlings of the Mænades.

* Suidas, at the word ΒΑΚΙΣ,

Plutarch

Plutarch pretends, that the women of that part of Peloponnesus were also consumed by an illegitimate flame, the dreadful symptoms of which have been described by Sappho. It is possible that a vicious organization might be the first cause of this depravity; but it cannot be denied, that an immoderate use of the wines of Laconia, still more violent than those of Lesbos, must have contributed greatly to inflame individuals, who had the smallest disposition towards such a deviation. It is a circumstance very astonishing, that this illusive passion did not cure real love; and Sappho experienced so powerfully the influence of both chains at once, that she had recourse to the rock of Leucas. It is not positively known whether she ended her days there, or was among the number of those who, as Strabo says, provided feathers and wings, in hopes of supporting themselves on the sea, after their fall, until they should receive succour. The priests of Apollo pretended, that this immersion had a powerful effect in calming erotic fury; and they treated love, as physicians do the hydrophobia, because great diseases, said they, require violent remedies.

The second cause of the dissoluteness of the Lacedæmonian women is clearly traced to luxury, and the immense riches they had acquired by inheriting the possessions of the male branches, mown down by war and discord. When an heiress entered

entered into matrimonial engagements, she preserved, even during the term of that union, the right to dispose of her fortune.*

Such institutions rendered the Spartans slaves to their own wives, who had not only great authority in the interior of families, but likewise considerable influence in the deliberations of the state; and they took care never to prevent war, which to them was the source of gain. When Agis attempted to reform the government, they let him know that he wanted force to operate such a revolution, and they did not fail to justify their assertion. Vicious in its principles, and attacked by so many disorders, the state could only degenerate into despotism; and this event took place in the reign of Cleomenes, who equalled in atrocity all the tyrants by whom he was succeeded.

Although the excessive depopulation of Lacedæmon had been produced in a great measure by the nature of its government, added to that national pride which prevented strangers from aspiring at the freedom of the city, yet the libertinism, and still more the profusion of the women, must have contributed greatly to diminish the number of births, as well as of marriages. In proportion to the progress of luxury, bachelors naturally augment in number, because citizens, who would wish to become fa-

* Ubbo Emmius *on the republic of Lacedæmon.*

thers

thers of families, have no inclination to ruin themselves for the sole pleasure of seeing their wives clothed in silk, or adorned with egrettes of diamonds. The robe of Penthesilea, said a philosopher of Corinth, is very rich, and superbly embroidered, but it will prevent her from ever being married.

Aristotle asserts in his book on politics, each line of which contains a useful lesson, or a great truth, that the dowers of women ought to be very small in republican governments, particularly when depopulation threatens a state with destruction, as at Lacedæmon. But instead of this, continues he, it is precisely there that they are excessive, and oppose a thousand obstacles to the increase of the human race. This abuse, we can easily perceive, was connected with the avarice of the nation; for the men alone determine the proportion of dowries, when they wish to regulate them by just laws.

II.—MILITARY EDUCATION OF THE LACEDÆMONIANS.

As it is a great error in agriculture to overlabor the ground, it was equally injudicious in the Lacedæmonians to harass their troops too much with military exercises. Immoderate exertions flatten the natural courage of man, who,

impressed daily with the image of death and destruction, begins to fear the steel, and ends by detesting it. From this cause the Spartans became such famous Thrasydiles, that they were totally insensible to the poesy of Tyrtæus.

In the midst of peace, the Athenians were always crowned with violets, and clothed in purple: they frequented the spectacles and fairs, or conducted the choir and dance from Phaleris to Marathon, without ever remembering some old armour, which they considered as the most useless furniture of their houses. But when appearances of war became serious, these men sought out their swords and helmets, and joined battle on the morrow, according to all the rules of tactics. Against the first principles of this art, whith they studied only once in their lives, they were never known to err; and Diodorus Siculus attests, that their heavy cavalry were the best in Greece, while those of Lacedæmon, merely from being too much exercised, became useless. Nothing in fact can be imagined more absurd than to fatigue horses so much in time of peace, that they are unfit for service in war.

It must not be imagined, that the exercise of the youths of Sparta displayed either great genius, or many combinations; for they were so servilely copied from the Cretan institutions, that it was impossible, either in words or things, to observe the smallest difference. At Lacedæ-

mon,

mon, as well as at Crete, the name of *Agele* was given to a company of children, who were to combat others of the same age and force, until one party had thrown the other into the waters of the Eurotas. Many individuals, born free of bodily defects, whose constitutions had received the approbation of the magistrates, were maimed like Agesilaus by such falls, and remained in that condition during their whole lives.

It has been the constant care of all polished nations to restrain the quarrelsome propensity of male children: but at Sparta, on the contrary, it was encouraged. The revolution which takes place in the characters of many persons, at the age of twenty four years, is very remarkable; for it is certain that those, who have been the most ardent and furious champions during youth, become frequently the greatest cowards when they attain to manhood. This irascible, and savage disposition has its source in the heat of the blood; and the absolute ignorance of children, with regard to what is called justice, leads them constantly to have recourse to force. It was therefore a great error in morals, on the part of the Spartans, to augment such a propensity which is founded on a blind impulse merely animal.

At the age of five years, the children of Lacedæmon began to learn the Pyrrhic, or military dance; and they then were placed under the discipline

discipline of musicians, who taught them to play on the Laconian flute. All citizens had to acquire some knowledge of different airs used in the army, for by them the evolutions of the phalanx were always regulated.

On attaining their seventh year, they quitted the paternal home to inhabit barracks, where the state provided for their maintenance. Some authors pretend, that they were reared in the interior country of Laconia, at a great distance from the capital; and this rural education, according to Justin, was so rigid, that pupils were not allowed to enter the city before they had attained the age of thirty years, the term fixed by the law for virility.*

It is a fact, that the principal gymnasium, consecrated to military exercises, and called the PHOEBEUM, was situated at some distance from the town of Lacedæmon, towards Therapne, on the east side of the Eurotas. This however does not prevent the assertion of Justin from being altogether erroneous, as well as the greatest part of the details which the ancients have communicated, relative to the Spartans. The children were frequently exercised in the centre of the city, otherwise so many of them could

* *Pueros puberes non in forum, sed in agros deduci præcepit, neque prius in urbem redire, quam viri facti essent, statuit.*

All the other institutions attributed by Justin to Lycurgus, were equally fabulous.

never

never have been buried under the ruins of a portico, as really happened during an earthquake. Besides, at all general reviews of the army, they dined with the soldiers in the public halls; and the magistrates, called Bidians, who are known to have been charged with the department of public education, held their tribunals in the midst of Lacedæmon.

The corps of young men, maintained in common by the state, was composed of four different classes.

The first contained all the children of free citizens, without any regard to fortune, rank, or dignity, except the presumptive heirs to the throne, who were not exposed to receive blows in boxing, through fear of diminishing the respect due to kings.

Next to these were the *Mothaces*, whose condition was little superior to that of freedmen: but after having finished their course of education, they were qualified for every military promotion either in the fleet, or the army, as we find exemplified in Lysander.

To the two classes we have mentioned succeeded the children of strangers, whose parents, infatuated with the institutions of Sparta, had sent them to learn the exercise of arms, and acquire bad morals. They were called *Trophines*, and were obliged, according to every appearance, to pay for their board, as well as their clothing,

clothing, which was the uniform of all the barracks.

Finally, the fourth division consisted of illegitimate children, produced in time of peace, as well as of war, by the incontinence of the virgins, and wives of Lacedæmon.* Xenophon calls them plainly *the bastards of the Spartans*; but to soften afterwards the harshness of terms by the excellence of things, he pretends, that notwithstanding the irregularity of their birth, many individuals among them might be compared to the first men of the nation.*

All these youths were instructed in military songs, some of which were elegies, composed by Tyrtæus, or anapæstic poems of Sophron and Spendon, who adapted the measure of their verse to the military music of Lacedæmon. The Spartans never attacked their enemies but with the alternate sound of anapæsts and spondees, which occasioned a progressive motion of rapid and slow steps. Hephestion of Alexandria has preserved the first verse of one of their songs to this purport: *O ye armed children of Sparta, make the movements of Mars.*† The measure of the Greek text

* These illigitimate children are called ΝΟΘΟΙ ΤΩΝ ΣΠΑΡΤΙΑΤΩΝ, in the fourth book of the Hellenica.

* ΑΓΕΤ᾽Ω | ΣΠΑΡΤΑΣ | ᾽ΕΝΟΠΛΟΙ | ΚΟΥΡΟΙ | ΠΟΤΙ ΤΑΝ | ᾽ΑΡΕΩΣ ΚΙΝΑ ΣΙΝ.

By this we find that the military songs of Lacedæmon consisted three spondees, four anapæsts, and a supernumerary syllable

text is preserved here, in favor of those who have no knowledge of the prosody of that nation; and by this alone an idea of such melody may be as exactly formed, as if the Laconian flute or lyre were heard in the midst of a camp.

As the song of war among the savages of America, without having any influence on the courage of warriors, augments the spirit of vengeance, which is terrible among barbarians; in the same manner, the verses of Sophron, Spendon, and Tyrtæus inflamed the vindictive spirit of the Lacedæmonians. The chiefs of the military schools endeavoured even to augment this atrocity of disposition, by encouraging their pupils to slaughter the Helotes in ambuscades, and to pillage the farm yards of the Laconian tributaries, whenever they could effect it by stratagem or surprise.

Those who doubt of such facts, do not reflect upon the unhappy state of Europe during the feudal times, when all the gentlemen robbed on the highway. The greater part of the hills in Germany are still covered with ruins of ancient castles, which all the historians of that country confess were formerly the habitations of robbers; and the first barons of the empire boasted of the brilliant fortunes they accumulated by

syllable which served to commence the following verse. This metre contained no cæsura whatever; and the dialect was always Doric or Laco-Doric.

this

this profession. The emperor Rodolph destroyed sixty-six of these fortresses; and although one hundred and forty were afterwards demolished by the Swabian league, yet the number still remaining was prodigious.

It is easy to judge from such facts to what a pitch the human mind can be degraded, from a total neglect of laws, arts, sciences, and all the civil institutions which alone render man superior to the wild beasts. Religion in itself had no influence on the virtue of the Lacedæmonians, although they were excessively superstitious; and all the knights, who plundered and assassinated the travellers in feodal times, were Christians: it was therefore not by theology, but by a police somewhat improved, that these depredations were terminated.

Plutarch pretends, that murder and dexterous theft were permitted among the children of Sparta, in order to form them early to the principles and operations of pillage. Such essays could never have been practised in a country perfectly united; but Laconia was inhabited by two different nations, the one oppressing the other. In the possessions of the conquered Messenians and Achæans alone, the military scholars committed so many ravages; for they dared not even to pilfer in the midst of Lacedæmon, where every thing belonged to the Doric race.

This

This observation dispels the difficulties encountered by those, who proposed to discover the source of the Laconian institutions, which tended evidently to weaken the Helotes, as well as the tributary inhabitants, who conceived such an antipathy to the Spartans, that they would willingly, as they said, have devoured their very entrails. Such were the expressions in the avowal of Cinadon before the ephori, when they discovered the famous conspiracy formed by the ancient inhabitants of Laconia against Lacedæmon.*

It is sufficient to reflect on the plan of this education, which combined wrestling, boxing, running, hunting, music, dancing, tactics, robbery, and assassination, to be convinced that it affected the bodily faculties alone, and smothered the culture of the mind. Isocrates and Plato attest, that the Lacedæmonians were so ignorant, that they could neither read, write, nor even count beyond their fingers. This was regarded at Athens as the greatest disgrace; and the most cruel abuse there consisted in calling a citizen *apaedeutos*, and *amousos*, which signified a person whose education had been neglected.

King Agis, the last of that name, who ceased not to sigh over the barbarity and corruption of the Spartans, imagined that it was still possible to reform their morals by enlightening them on

* Xenophon, Hellenica, lib. III.

their

their duties; and he invited a Stoic philosopher, called Sphorus, to instruct the youths of Lacedæmon. We have still some fragments of a political treatise composed by that person; but the proposed plan of education was entirely abandoned, after Agis had been immolated by the hands of those whom he wished to reclaim. The Lacedæmonians, determined that no person should fix bounds to their perversity, tore this king from his throne, and strangled him in prison like the most guilty ruffian. Anarchy then increased; the confusion became inexpressible, and the state falling with a dreadful crash, buried eternally those men who preferred all political evils to the remedies presented by philosophy.

We might terminate here this article, were it not necessary to observe, that the stripes, inflicted on the children before the statue of Diana Orthia, have been confounded with the exercises of youth, while in fact they had no connexion whatever.

This flagellation was a religious ceremony, or rather the effect of an execrable fanaticism, the origin of which is perfectly known. According to the testimony of both Pausanias and Porphyrius, it was customary in former times to sacrifice human victims at Lacedæmon; but when the voice of humanity had softened the hearts of the Greeks, these impious and unnatural immolations were

were abolished. Yet the Lacedæmonians, bigotted to their ancient usages, pretended that the statue of Diana Orthia was so much accustomed to receive such offerings, that they could not be refused, without occasioning some great disaster to the nation. Instead however of tearing out the hearts of children, they were flagellated until the altar and the pavement of the temple streamed with blood, and their wounds often became inflamed to such a degree, that they expired in the course of a few days after.*

Cicero was certainly wrong in counting such exploits among the examples of Spartan constancy; for in whatever way this sacrifice is considered, it presents nothing more than a spectacle of frightful superstition. Similar practices prevailed among the other nations of the Doric race, established in Peloponnesus; and there also the blood of children was shed on the *tomb of Pelops*, for so they named this altar worthy of Tauris.*

It is needless to produce further proofs, in opposition to the error of those, who have maintained that this ceremony was not practised in any part of Greece, except at Lacedæmon. In the latter country it was confined to the children

* Porphyrius, on *Abstinence* lib. II. and Pausanias, LACONICA.

* This sacrifice was called, in Peloponnesus, ΑΙΜΑΚΟΥΡΙΑ. or *the effusion of infant blood*.

of

of slaves, and of the Helotes, whose condition compelled them to submit to a system of oppression, which rated the life of a man as trifling, and that of a child as nothing.*

III.—CHARACTER OF THE LACEDÆMONIANS.

Two causes alone can change a pacific into a military nation; the one is the fear of being subdued, and the other the desire of conquest.

The Lacedæmonians were actuated by both at the same time; for they dreaded the efforts of their slaves in the first place, and strengthened themselves more and more to preserve the important acquisition of Messenia, with which their political existence was closely connected. Afterwards, they pretended to the empire of the sea; and thus all their ideas were concentered in military operations.

Such a violent situation necessarily inspired melancholy, while the continual exercise of arms occasioned an habitual taciturnity; and to this we trace the true origin of their Laconism. All the Greek tacticians have observed, that it was absolutely necessary to shorten, as much as possible, the phrases used by the commanders in the evolutions of the phalanx, during which a strict silence was imposed on the soldiers.†

* *Grecian Archaiology.*

† Arrian's *Tactics.*

The

The Lacedæmonians, accustomed to this manner of speaking from their earliest infancy, preserved naturally the same habit in civil life; and it is difficult to conceive how Mr. de la Nauze could have mistaken military Laconism for a characteristic of the sublimest philosophy. The proofs employed by him, in support of his paradox, discover a confused erudition, destitute of all notions of criticism, and consequently worse than ignorance itself.*

It is certain that the author of the treatise on the republic of Lacedæmonh as exaggerated, in a ridiculous manner, the gloomy air, and reserved manner of the Spartans. *These men*, says he, *walk in public with so much gravity, that they are no more heard to speak than the stones; their eyes are as motionless as if they were brazen statues; and they have more bashfulness than ever reigned in the most inaccessible apartments of virgins.*

These are exactly the phrases and hyperboles, so much condemned by Longinus in his treatise on the sublime; but if he had possessed penetration sufficient to distinguish the spurious productions of ignorant painters from the originals of great masters, he would have perceived that he was unjust to the character of Xenophon. The work, from which this passage is selected, according to Demetrius of Magnesia, had been

* *Memoire sur l'etat des sciences a Lacedæmone*; in the collection of the Academy of Inscriptions.

falsely attributed to that author by some of those pseudonymous writers, who were so numerous at Athens; and we have already observed how much their pernicious industry spread clouds of darkness over literature.

The taciturnity of the Lacedæmonians, perhaps, would have been less remarkable in any country of Europe than among the Greeks, the greater part of whom were eternal reasoners. Always prepared for speaking in public, or disputing in the streets, they stopped under the first portico to solve their problems in the most noisy manner; and frequently carried parcels of books in the folds of their cloaks, to convince all the antogonists they might chance to meet, by decisive axioms.*

In Lacedæmon such contests were never heard; and the Doric language, spoken there, was so extremely poor, harsh, and obscure, that it could not be employed in scientific and abstract discussions. This dialect was not even intelligible to some of the inhabitants of Ionia; and it is only by means of a commentary, that the learned can now explain the jargon of a Lacedæmonian woman, introduced by Aristophanes in one of his comedies.

We have already had occasion to remark, that the great urbanity of the Athenians proceeded from their application to the study of philosophy,

* Plautus, in the *Curculio*.

as well as from the excessive lenity of their civil laws, the perfection of their theatre, and a constant connection with strangers of all nations, attracted into Attica by motives of commerce, or a taste for the fine arts. Not one of all these causes could influence the progress of civilization at Lacedæmon, where even luxury, so far from partaking of that elegance it discovered at Corinth, Argos, and Athens, degenerated into barbarous pomp, like that of the Turks, and the greater part of the Asiatics.

The Spartans concentred in themselves, living only with slaves, soldiers, and mean people, could neither soften their accent, enrich their language, improve their manners, nor correct their morals, by studying those of strangers, whom they repulsed with an insulting contempt, which had every appearance of violent hatred.

This civil intolerance, called in Greek *Xenelasia*, which rendered the Spartans so odious, resulted in a great measure from not only national pride, but from the very constitution of a military government. As the success of the expeditions they were constantly meditating depended greatly on secresy, all strangers were regarded as dangerous observers, and every thing relative to the real force of their armies, as well as the instructions of their commanders, was concealed with so much care, that the keenest eye could not pierce the veil of such mysteries. Thus

Thucydides acknowledges, that the historians, the annalists, and chronoligists of Greece could never procure sufficient information, to speak with certainty either of the effective number of men in the Lacedæmonian phalanx, or in the different corps of auxiliary troops.*

On the other hand, the debauches of the women were carried to such excess, that they could not with safety be permitted to have the smallest intercourse with strangers. They seldom failed to yield to the first temptation; and the example of Alcibiades, who gained admittance to the nuptial bed of their kings, proves strongly their incontinence. As these women were perfectly acquainted with all political affairs, every obstacle was opposed to their connexion with those, who might be interested in penetrating state secrets, which more than once have been betrayed by love.

From this it followed, that the women of Lacedæmon, abandoned to their own inclinations, and guided alone by the impulse of instinct, could not receive any advantage from the progress of morals in the other parts of Greece. They subjugated the men by the vices of their heart, without rendering them more polished by the charms of their wit. The great riches they had acquired, and the practice of appearing on the stage, made them confound

* Thucydides, lib. V. and Cragius, lib. IV.

the

the dress, adapted to the theatre, with what should have been used in domestic life; and the same confusion in modes and manners has appeared in the female dresses of Europe, during these last twenty years. Thus we find illustrious persons, who would be shocked at the idea of being considered as courtesans, or stage-dancers, taking the greatest pains to imitate their fashions. The most respectable institutions of society have been debased by being converted into a theatrical play, where new masks are daily introduced, and some of them so hideous, that they frighten away the very Graces.

It is essential to observe again, that the institutes, vulgarly attributed to Lycurgus, did not form a series of original laws, appropriated to the wants, or local circumstances of the continent of Greece; but had been copied from those of the Cretans, who, attacked by swarms of robbers, might have readily conceived an aversion for all strangers.*

This spirit of the Cretan laws was transferred to the Lacedæmonians, at a time when they were too ignorant to distinguish the political regulations suitable to the inhabitants of the continent, from such as were only adapted to the islands. Through all the Archipelago the scarcity of provisions, from the sterility of the soil, was so great, that strangers became burdensome;

* Pausanias, LACONICA.

and

and the legislators there must have thought it imprudent to encourage hospitality as a national virtue.

The Lacedæmonians had besides a constant apprehension, least strangers should secretly excite an insurrection among the slaves of Laconia. Aristotle seems to have believed, that this was the most plausible motive with them for their *Xenelasia*, or civil intolerance; but if they had treated those unfortunate people with more humanity, such fears would have vanished, as among the other Greeks, where domestic servitude was established on maxims infinitely less revolting.

The Lacedæmonians of the Doric race never exercised any trade whatever, either in the class of mechanics, or in that of the liberal arts. All their manufactures were carried on by Laconian tributaries, while the earth was tilled alone by the Helotes, and the conquered Messenians. But as commerce presented so many obvious means of acquiring wealth, the noble Lacedæmonians took part in all mercantile transactions, either directly, or through the interposition of their factors.

As soon as the citizens had attained the age when the law dispensed with military service, they began to practice usury, and became, as Plutarch says, soldier-bankers.*

* Plutarch, in his Treatise, *if it is expedient that old men should govern republics.*

They

They had in general such inclination for traffic, that the most rigorous punishment, inflicted by them on warriors who had discovered signs of cowardice, consisted in preventing them for a certain time from entering the market of Lacedæmon. It was in the same manner that the three hundred Spartans were treated, who, in the island of Sphacteria, had laid down their arms to the Athenians; but they were afterwards re-established, either through fear or compassion, in all the privileges of commerce, although they were the most notorious *Thrasydiles*, or rather the greatest cowards in Peloponnesus.*

We have remarked, that the Greeks in general introduced so many subtleties among the details of commerce, that their good faith was in little repute. At Athens, however, written laws existed to restrain mercantile frauds; and orators were not wanting to detect the culpable, and expose them to public justice. At Lacedæmon, on the contrary, where nothing was committed to writing, the police of commerce must have been subject to many uncertain, and arbitrary interpretations.

This want of positive jurisprudence disposed the Spartans to all kinds of intrigue, and tended more than every thing else to render their politics insidious. Among them, says Lysander

* Thucydides, lib. V.

 frankly,

frankly, the children must be deceived by tricks, and the men by oaths.

The Cretans afforded the strongest proofs, that constant cunning, and contempt for all civil contracts resulted from the defects of a constitution, incapable of inforcing social obligations. From never employing written laws, they rendered themselves equally famous in the world by their duplicity, sophistical logic, and all that was generally termed, the fictions of Crete.

Polybius pretends, that the inhabitants of that island were still more covetous, and sordidly avaricious than the Lacedæmonians; but he could scarcely have supported his assertion with facts, equal to those we have communicated in the preceding section.

The hundred towns of Crete never contained one half of the quantity of gold and silver heaped up in Lacedæmon. This booty, as we have observed, was the fruit of continual wars, undertaken without distinction against all the nations of Greece, where the Spartans were ambitious of reigning as masters; and all their politics were directed more or less to accomplish this favorite object. Crete, so far from appearing to have been animated with such projects, never made the smallest attempt against the liberties of the other islands; although its position was so well adapted for the centre of power, that no place, in the opinion of Aristotle, seemed more proper for the foundation of a great empire.

The

The svereest reproaches thrown on the Cretans by their cotemporaries, could never make them appear as odious as the Lacedæmonians, who were accused of neither respecting altars, good faith, nor oaths; because they violated every treaty and alliance, whenever they could promise themselves the smallest advantage. Never did more real impiety unite with greater apparent superstition than among the Lacedæmonians, who undertook their wars by consulting the gods, and afterwards plundered their temples. They pillaged the sacred territory of Elis, regarded inviolable by all the Greeks, from one extremity to the other; and rendered themselves accomplices of the sacrilege, committed on the treasures of Apollo at Delphi. It was by their hands that the flames were communicated to the sacred grove of Juno at Argos, where all the supplicants were consumed; and finally these traitors, in the midst of peace, took possession of the citadel of Thebes, in violation of every notion of good faith.

King Agesilaus has been distinguished from the other Spartans, because Xenophon, who had then espoused the party of Lacedæmon, wrote a very pompous elogy of that pretended hero, who in reality was nothing more than a notorious robber. All his expeditions in Asia and Egypt, by the confession even of his panegyrist, had no other object than to amass money by depre-

depredation. He brought from Lydia, Phrygia, and Egypt, twelve hundred and twenty talents, or two hundred and fifty thousand pounds sterling, without counting the pay of his troops, who lived at discretion on the territories of those whom they chose to call enemies.*

An inextinguishable thirst of plunder was a necessary effect of the education of the Lacedæmonians, in a military school, where theft and murder, reduced to system, served effectually to banish all notions of morality.

After having been instructed to despise all the rights of humanity, as well as the ties of civil life, they naturally attached great importance to force, or to cunning, which supplied its place; and regarding arms no otherwise than as instruments for satisfying their avarice, that passion augmented, in proportion as they heaped up spoils.

The custom of collecting all the young men into barracks, at a period when the fire of adolescence began to inflame their senses, produced the most pernicious consequences with regard to morals, by corrupting instinct, and in fact the Spartans were more infected than even the other Greeks, with that unfortunate passion, which shocks all the designs of nature.*

* Xenophon, ΛΟΓΟΣ ʼΕΙΣ ʼΑΓΗΣΙΛΑΟΝ ΤΟΝ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΑ. Also Cornelius Nepos, and Plutarch, *Life of Agesilaus.*

† Theodoretus, *de curandis Græcorum affectibus.* Sect. X.

To

To say that Lycurgus framed particular laws in favor of the depravity we have mentioned, is to accuse him of what was alledged in the same manner against the legislators of Crete. Yet it is very probable, that in all these things the effects have been confounded with the causes; for the mode of bringing up children among the Cretans and Spartans must have produced many inconveniences, unforeseen by their institutors. Lycurgus at least could not suppose, that the men of Lacedæmon, in contempt of all notions of modesty, would ever dare to appear naked at public exercises. We have already observed, that this mode was first introduced between the seventieth and eightieth Olympiad, and consequently many centuries after the death of Lycurgus, who therefore could never have been the author of what is imputed to him by historians, ignorant of chronology. It is absurd to suppose, that he ever required the women to appear in this manner, when every thing contradicts the idea of his having imposed any such indecency even on the men. In his time, it was considered as an action truly infamous to appear in public without clothes; although afterwards the Spartans became regardless of every consideration, and trampled on all the rights of decorum.

Such in general was the character of a nation inimical to morals and the arts of peace; which

ignorance

ignorance alone, independent of so many other causes, must have immersed in the last degree of corruption. Yet those, who have observed with what artifice the Spartans often conducted the most difficult enterprizes and political negociations, suppose that from their penetration they must have succeeded in the sciences, if they had applied themselves to study with as much ardor as the Athenians. But in this point it must be observed, that the difference is very great between the light necessary to guide rude nations in their personal interests, and that flame of genius, which pierces the veil of nature.

Doctor Robertson, who has commented my Dissertations on the Americans, observes, that even the most stupid savage nations frequently discover astonishing sagacity, when any circumstance affects immediately the preservation of their existence. This observation, applicable likewise to the instinct of some animals, proves clearly that the subtlety inspired by the physical wants of men, should never be confounded with the faculty of combining abstract ideas, by which he bounds over all spaces in the moral world, and fathoms in his mind what is not sensible to his sight.

Nothing can be more useless than attempts to dive into what a nation might have done, if certain laws and principles had been adopted; for if no great abilities are required to reason on facts,

facts, the art is still less to draw conclusions from possibilities.

IV.—PUBLIC REPASTS OF THE LACEDÆMONIANS.

The luxury of these feasts surpassed all the exaggerations of the Greeks relative to the Sybarites, their beds of roses, number of cooks, and sumptuousness of living.

Athenæus assures us, that, under the reign of king Acrotatus, nothing entered the halls, destined for the public repasts of the Lacedæmonians, but the most exquisite wines, precious perfumes, and the choicest deserts. The cushions of their beds, filled with the down of the swans of Amycles, were ornamented, as well as their carpets, with so many rich embroideries, that strangers, little accustomed to such Asiatic pomp, could with difficulty be persuaded to repose themselves, through fear of injuring the furniture.*

While the Lacedæmonians, before the conquest of Messenia, were a poor people, it was impossible for them to display great luxury; but when they had collected the spoils of an hundred ransomed nations, and of as many countries totally pillaged, like Attica, Elis, and Corcyra, their dissoluteness became excessive. No moderation was preserved except in wearing apparel;

* DIPNOSOPH. lib. IV.

and

and nearly the same policy prevails with the aristocrates of Bern, and the nobles of Venice; who wear in public the most doleful robes, while their apartments are hung round with the richest tissues of gold and silver.

It is from pride alone, says Aristotle, that the Lacedæmonians affect such carelessness in their clothes; yet this was accompanied with a certain policy; for wherever the form of civil government approaches oligarchy, the show of dress diminishes among the members of the regency, and luxury of furniture encreases. When a small number of men, who dare not assume the title of kings, rule despotically over a subjugated nation, they must be careful not appear too splendidly in public, lest, by wounding the eyes of the oppressed, they might be led to the extremities of despair. Thus we find that tyranny, as well as liberty, has its secrets.

Nature has taught the most savage and barbarous nations, that each father of a family should preside in his house, and at his own table. Thus the repasts of the Lacedæmonians were institutions totally opposite to the primitive usages, established with the general consent of mankind in other parts of the world. When a nation is constrained to shock the general order of all societies, it must be supposed that very particular circumstances have occasioned such deviation from the path indicated by reason. It

is

is in their military exercises alone, that we must look for the origin of the public meals of the Lacedæmonian. Sparta ressembled a military academy, where the citizens, scattered in the interior of Laconia, repaired to learn the art of war, under the eyes of the Epori; and the necessity of providing subsistence for such a number of men, whose families were far distant from the capital, gave rise to those public tables, maintained at the expence of the guests. Some modern authors pretend, that these repasts continued only during one month in the year.* In fact, that term was sufficient for reviewing the citizens, and exercising them in the evolutions of the phalanx; and, unless on similar occasions, very few Spartans remained at Lacedæmon.†

If Plato had entered into the spirit of such institutions, he would not have been so much astonished that women were excluded from these military feasts; for similar motives prevented them likewise from being admitted into a camp, or on board of the fleet.

All these customs produced great disorder in the affairs of poor families, especially as they

* Meursius, *Miscellanea Laconica*, lib. I.

† Xenophon assures us, that on the day when the conspiracy of Cinadon broke out, not more than forty Spartans were in the town of Lacedæmon; all the rest had retired into the country.

had

had to pay an equal price with the most opulent for their eating. What to the latter was no material expence, became an insupportable burden to the former; and Aristotle declaims against the manifest injustice of assessing so unequally this contribution, which was the equivalent of an impost.*

When a Spartan, either through imprudence, or some unforseen disaster, became so indigent, that he could not possibly contribute to the militry repasts, he forfeited immediately his civil dignity, and was reduced to the class of those, who were called *Hypomiones*, or subjects incapable of occupying any charge in the magistracy.

In this part of the administration, as well as in that of the finances, great abuses were committed; and each citizen had to furnish far more provisions than any man could consume.

The Roman soldiers did not receive more for their subsistence than four bushels of wheat monthly, while at Lacedæmon, the quota of each guest, besides a great quantity of wine, was nine bushels of flour in thirty days, or one medimnus and a half, Athenian measure.†

When an unbridled luxury was joined to this profusion, the greater part of the citizens found themselves incapable of supporting such expence. By this means, the government de-

* POLITIC. lib. II.

† Fragmeat of Dicearchus the Laconian, cited by Athenæus.

generated

generated constantly into Oligarchy; for the more people were excluded from the magistracy, the more such power became concentred in a small number of families.

Some philosophers of antiquity have believed, that in the island of Crete, similar institutions were founded on a system less defective than at Lacedæmon, because the public taxes were supplied, not by individuals, but at the expence of the nation. They differed, however, very little in their effects; for, instead of inspiring a taste for moderation, and a love of frugality, they introduced debauches and intemperance among the army. Xenophon confesses, that when the Lacedæmonians came to pillage the town of Corcyra, their troops fell into such dissoluteness, that they refused to drink any other than perfumed wines; and this was considered as the most fantastic extravagance of regal luxury.

These excesses were productive of dreadful consequences; and it was the general opinion in Greece that the Spartan Cleombrotus, who commanded the army of his country at the battle of Leuctra, had got drunk with all the other generals of his council. During this fit of intoxication they determined to attack the Thebans, and in consequence of this they lost Messenia, and brought destruction on the state.

V.—INTERIOR OF THE TOWN OF LACEDÆMON.

The description we have given of Laconia, was only intended to fix the ideas of the reader on that part of Greece in general: and in a sketch taken with such rapidity, it was impossible to introduce any particular observations, relative to the capital. We must therefore now descend into this extraordinary place, to acquire a more perfect knowledge of the manners and luxury of the inhabitants.

Lacedæmon, situated at the bottom of a long valley, watered by the Eurotas, was inferior to no town of Peloponnesus, either in the natural charms of the surrounding country, or the profusion of artificial ornaments. The public guides, who conducted strangers through this labyrinth of thickets and gardens, related numberless mythological adventures of Castor, Pollux, Hyacinth, Leda, and particularly of Helen, whose name was traced on the greater part of the plane-trees in the Doric sentence; *reverence me, for I am the tree of Helen.** These inscriptions of the shepherds and idle hunters were afterwards pointed out by the mystagogues as historical monuments; but it was really there, in a place called the Platanista, that the poet Alcman so often strung his lyre, on a tone equally voluptuous with Anacreon. There also the

* ΣΕΒΟΥ Μ' ΕΛΕΝΑΣ ΦΥΤΟΝ ΕΙΜΙ.

daughters

daughters of Sparta were frequently heard singing the ode, composed by Sappho in her fifteenth year, which began with these words: *O virginity, virginity, whither art thou fled, after having abandoned me?*

The traveller, on arriving at Lacedæmon through these romantic avenues, famous for so many exploits, was more astonished by the objects which presented themselves to his view, than by all that he had just heard. No town of European Greece was ornamented in such an eastern style; and all the public buildings discovered the most extravagant pomp and profusion. The chief temple, consecrated to Minerva, appeared to be entirely constructed of brass; for the front, and all the visible parts, from the roof to the very base of the columns, were completely sheathed with that metal, ornamented with sculptures and bas-reliefs, in form of medallions. They represented the labors of Hercules, the miraculous birth of Minerva, and other subjects of that nature, selected from a chaos of fables, called in those days Theology.

It was through pure ostentation of their riches and power, that the Lacedæmonians adopted this mode of constructing an edifice, which might have been infinitely better executed in stone. The intrinsic value of a metal, subject to corrosion from the moist air occasioned by the frequent inundations of the Eurotas, could add

nothing more to the value of exterior ornaments, than the image of a profusion unexampled in Greece.

To this temple of Minerva, situated in the centre of the city, succeeded the great theatre, on which likewise prodigious sums had been expended; and Pausanias describes it as built entirely of white marble. In exterior magnificence it must have surpassed greatly that of Athens, hewn simply in the rock; but the farces and dramas, represented there, were so ignoble, that they disgraced the magnificence of the building.

Among the public edifices and tribunals environing the great place of Lacedæmon, the *Portico of the Persians* was most remarkable; and there likewise all correctness, as well as simplicity of architecture, had been sacrificed to false ideas of grandeur. The entablature, instead of resting on columns of any particular order, was supported by colossal statues of the principal officers in the army of Xerxes, taken or killed at the battle of Platææ. Among others appeared Mardonius, in the humiliating attitude of a captive, and clothed with all the Asiatic profusion of the Persian or Median Satraps.*

This portico, constructed in direct opposition to all the true principles of art, was liable to all

* Vitruvius, *Architect*, lib. I. and the Commentaries of Philander on the Caryatides.

that

that can be objected to the bad taste, and defective use of Caryatides: for the necks of the statues were manifestly too slender to be in any proportion with the load of the architrave and frieze. As the architects of that part of Peloponnesus, according to every appearance, were the inventors of Caryatides, thus named from a small town of Laconia, they affected to prefer this taste to all others. The throne of Apollo at Amycles was erected, in the same manner, with personified Graces and Hours, supporting the most massive part of an astonishing group of figures and ornaments in brass. Thus lightness, which is the first attribute of the Hours and Graces, was changed into a suffering attitude, and a state of constraint totally incompatible with the nature of such symbols.

The best ornamented place in all Lacedæmon was the *Poecile*; which, instead of being confined to a simple gallery, like that of Athens, occupied a very considerable extent. The superb paintings in fresco, employed to decorate the walk, were afterwards taken away by the Romans, who with incredible pains sawed through the cement which incorporated them with the building; and they arrived in Italy, without having received the smallest injury from so violent an opperation.*

It was thus that insatiable conquerors deprived

* Pliny H. N. lib. XXXV.

Greece of those ornaments, least liable in appearance to be pillaged, and which, having been afterwards buried in some country palace near Rome, were so totally lost to the history of the Arts, that even the subjects of those famous paintings, executed at Lacedæmon by foreigners, are no longer known. Never did Laconia produce any painter worthy to be compared with the common artists of the school of Sycion; and in sculpture Gitiades alone acquired some reputation from a medallion in bronze, representing Amphitrite and Neptune. This was his master-piece, and nothing comparable to it had ever been produced by a Spartan.

Further advanced in the city, appeared different ranges of porticos, destined alone for the display of various kinds of merchandise. Although Lacedæmon, owing to its distance from the Mediterranean, was not a commercial place, yet numbers of people were employed there in selling the spoils, collected by the army in the course of the campaign. We have already observed, that the inhabitants of Laconia carried on a regular commerce in Crete, Africa, and particularly in Egypt, where they were received with less distrust than the Athenians, who had endeavoured to conquer the Delta as far as Memphis. This attempt rendered them greatly suspected in the ports of Egypt, even when that country came under the dominion of the Macedonians,

donians, who already in the days of Alexander began, says Demosthenes, to discourage the Athenians from trading to the mouth of the Nile.* They, therefore, abandoned almost entirely that part of Africa, to direct all their speculations towards the Crimea, and the harbours of the Black Sea.

Private houses at Lacedæmon were very lofty, and built with much greater solidity than those of Athens. From this circumstance the great earthquake, which destroyed Sparta in the year four hundred and sixty-nine before our Era, became fatal to so many persons. It is asserted, that of all the citizens and slaves, inhabiting the town, only one hundred and fifty escaped, while twenty thousand people of every denomination were buried under the ruins.* If this report is not exaggerated, it furnishes all the necessary information, relative to the population of that town, which occupying a circular space of forty eight stadia, or five miles in circumference, did not yield so much in size to Athens, as Thucydides seems to have imagined. This shock, so terrible to the principal city of Peloponessus, was produced by the sudden conflagration of volcanic substances, heaped up under the base of Taygetus; and huge masses of rocks, rolling from

* Demosthenes against *Dionysiodorus.*

† Diodorus Siculus. lib. IX.

that mountain, spread destruction on every side. It appears, that the continent of Greece contained two kinds of subterraneous fires, very different in their effects. The one was attended with explosions, and consequently with earthquakes, while the other continued to burn without any noise, like those warm fountains, where an equal degree of temperature has been remarked during more than a thousand years. Volcanos preserve an astonishing uniformity in this respect; for, if their fires augmented, such sources must speedily evaporate, and, on the contrary, no diminution of heat could take place, without affecting the thermal waters in the same proportion. It is known from local observations, made at different places, that neither of these events have occurred in the lapse of many centuries. The more we reflect upon such circumstances, the clearer it appears, that natural philosophy has hitherto made little progress in acquiring a knowledge of the interior state of the globe, the diurnal motion of which will one day perhaps appear to have some connection with the action of concentred volcanos.

After the catastrophe we have mentioned, the architects of Laconia thought fit to rebuild Lacedæmon on the very spot it had formerly occupied, in the same manner that Lisbon, in our days, rose from its ruins. When Thucydides pretends, that the town was only inhabited in

separate

separate districts, he must be understood as meaning nothing more than the irregularity of the streets, where ancient tombs prevented the symmetry and contiguity of the houses. Of all the European Greeks the Spartans alone would never renounce the barbarous custom of interring their dead in the centre of the capital, where no less than twenty clusters of habitations were under the inspection of as many magistrates, called *harmostes of the interior*, to distinguish them from those who governed the districts of Laconia.

Even before Sparta was surrounded with walls, it could not easily be approached by an enemy; for the Eurotas, from its winding course, protected so completely the town to the north and east, that no sufficient space was left to make a regular attack on the side facing the Hippodromus. All the principal streets were, besides, so narrow at their entrance, that few armed men could advance in front; and when the Romans, commanded by Flaminius, attempted to penetrate there, by making three assaults at once, the besieged set fire to the advanced quarters, and their enemies, crowded together, were consumed amidst the flames, or crushed by falling edifices.*

When barbarous nations began to over-run the Roman empire, they directed their expedi-

* Titus Livius, DECAD. IV.

tions,

tions chiefly towards the countries, where they hoped to find the strongest wine. This might be called the compass, by which all their marches were directed; and as the numerous vineyards of Laconia produced the most fiery wines of all the continent of Greece, the invaders were not tardy in attacking Lacedæmon. Libanius, who wrote under the reign of Julian, speaks already of these bacchic expeditions: and they became afterwards so frequent, that they contributed greatly to the destruction of that town. Some considerable ruins however remained in the year one thousand four hundred and sixty-four, when the Caryatides of the portico of the Persians, and other remarkable pieces of architecture, were still in some degree of preservation. Since that period they have been so completely overturned, that nothing can be traced, except some vestiges of the Hippodromus, and of the theatre, in a place called *Paleo-chori*, or the old town, situated in thirty seven degrees, and eleven minutes, north latitude.

The Greeks of the Morea have been long persuaded, that the prodigious quantities of gold, anciently buried in the environs of Lacedæmon, exceeded greatly what was found by chance in a vault at Athens, below the theatre. This treasure apparently had been deposited there by the accomplices of Harpalus, who secretly conveyed to Attica upwards of one million sterling, taken out

out of the treasury of Alexander at Babylon. It is very possible, that the idea of finding a great fortune, by digging among the ruins of Lacedæmon, contributed to demolish even the fragments that remained when the Turks arrived in Peloponnesus. The Greek historians have never indeed been able to discover what was the fate of the gold and silver heaped up by the Spartans. In the time of Nabis four hundred talents had been paid to the Romans; but this contribution did not amount to the hundredth part of what Nabis himself had acquired by his continual depredations. Long after his death, such ideas were formed of the extraordinary riches of Lacedæmon, that it was devoted to pillage by Brutus and Cassius, as a recompense for the valour of their troops, had victory declared in their favour at Philippi. The Spartans seconded the attempts of Augustus, and of Mark Anthony against the liberty of Rome, precisely in the same manner that they formerly exerted all their force to support the tyrant Dionysius, and render him despotic in Sicily.*

END OF THE TENTH SECTION.

* Appianus of Alexandria, *History of the Civil Wars*, lib. IV.

SECT. XI.

GOVERNMENT OF LACEDÆMON.

I.—LYCURGUS, AND THE USE OF UNWRITTEN LAWS.

The greatest politician ever produced by Greece has observed, that a more rash and dangerous measure could not have been adopted by the magistrates of Crete, as well as of Lacedæmon, than that of governing without written laws. By this they rendered themselves almost despotic; decided all contests in an arbitrary manner; punished citizens without observing any formalities; and resembled officers, conducting a company of soldiers, more than civil magistrates. That spirit contained the very essence of military government; and unfortunately it was but too prevalent at Sparta, where the kings and the ephori had an equal interest in preferring anarchy to a positive legislation, which would have limited the power of these rivals, always bent on mutual destruction.

It has been commonly said, that Lycurgus could both read and write; but that he preferred

ferred laying the people under the necessity of committing his laws to memory, that they might make a stronger impression.*

We may venture to affirm, that those, who hazarded such an assertion, did not possess common understanding; for the people could have equally got the pretended laws of Lycurgus by heart, had they even been inscribed in the archives of Lacedæmon, as those of Solon were preserved in the citadel of Athens. Thus, to justify absurd institutions, recourse has been had to arguments still more ridiculous; and this must ever be the fate of those, who invent, or adopt paradoxes.

Instead of written laws, says Cicero, the Lacedæmonians are governed by manners and usages. In such a state, as well as among the savages, the old men naturally acquired great influence and authority, because their knowledge must have been far more extensive than that of the others. It was necessary to interrogate them, respecting the spirit or antiquity of customs, and learn from their lips what had been told by their ancestors.

Notwithstanding this influence of the old men, it sometimes happened, that a magistrate appeared in public, pretending to have recollected by chance an ancient law, no longer remembered by the nation, and which was after-

* Cragius, *Republic of Lacedæmon*, lib. III.

wards

wards attributed to Lycurgus, in whose shade all the intriguers played their different parts. Without annals, registers, or documents of any kind, it was impossible to trace with certainty the origin of any civil institution. Tradition varied exceedingly, even respecting the degree of power confided originally in the ephori; and on all such matters, the sentiments of the kings were totally opposite to those of the chief magistrates.*

An author, who from the nature of the subject has been led to discuss the elements of Grecian jurisprudence, declares, that in all his researches, he could not trace any civil law composed by Lycurgus.† As we have produced strong proofs, that he never composed any political institutions, it must therefore be concluded, that, ignorant of letters, he had contented himself with introducing the exercises of Crete among the Spartans. He would have shewn himself the most inconsistent of mankind by rejecting an invention, which alone can preserve primative laws from varying in the mouths of each generation, and prevent their being changed by designing interpreters.

One hundred and fifty years before the first Olympiad, alphabetical knowledge had made little progress in Greece, and we may be assured, that

* Plutarch's *life of Cleomenes.*

† Goguet, *de l'orgine des Arts, des Sciences, des Lois.*

that it was then totally unknown among nations, so barbarous and inimical to every kind of improvement as the Dorians of Laconia.

Maximus of Tyre has remarked, that the poems of Homer were not introduced at Lacedæmon and Crete, until after they had been long commonly sung in Bæotia and Attica.* It is therefore absurd to pretend, that the first copy of these poems was brought from Asia into Europe by Lycurgus, who has been confounded with others of the same name; and the error of ascribing to one person what belonged to another has produced great confusion in chronology, as well as history.

We have frequently been led to observe in the course of this work, that among the Greeks in general, historical criticism had made less progress than any other of the sciences. Their philosophers never studied any language but their own; and this method has been supposed by some to be more advantageous, than that of the moderns, because it seems to abridge the course of studies. But, on the contrary, the knowledge of foreign languages leads to an investigation of the genius of nations; enables us to verify different monuments; and destroys that vain credulity, and mythological spirit, which were the greatest plagues of the Greeks,

* Maximus of Tyre, *Dissertation* XXIII.

as well as of all the Asiatics, who likewise never acquired any other language than their own.

Amongst people, such as the Spartans, immersed in profound and voluntary ignorance, it was impossible by any means to pierce the veil of antiquity, or to distinguish the real institutions of Lycurgus from those attributed to him by a false tradition. If it was really he who ordered the Helotes to be assassinated in the most perfidious manner, without any form of process, that instance of atrocity would be sufficient to tarnish his name for ever: and his memory would merit detestation, had the Lacedæmonians been changed by him into a nation of soldiers, to conquer Messenia, and pillage successively all the states of Greece. That these robbers, in the midst of arms, blood, and pillage, should have placed any restraint on their iniquity, was altogether impossible; for if the mind of the sage can scarcely support prosperity, a nation so corrupt could never be supposed to use moderation after victory. It must have been against their will that the Lacedæmonians at length employed writing in their treaties with different nations; and when they concluded peace with Athens, or an alliance with Argos, the articles were engraved on columns of marble, and each contracting power preserved a copy. As the temple of Apollo at Amycles was the repository of all such monuments, it has been believed, that

that by digging to a certain depth, many inscriptions might be found there, highly important for the History of Greece. Louis the fourteenth ordered some researches to be made at a place called *Slabo-chori*; but as they had not been directed by any exact local knowledge, nothing more was found than a catalogue of the priestesses of Apollo.* Neither does that inscription seem to be so ancient as hitherto supposed; for the manner of writing alternatively from left to right, and from right to left, is no proof of its antiquity; because this manner, called *boustrophedon*, was used in Arcadia, Messenia, and Laconia, long after it had been abandoned at Athens.

It is generally believed, that the Lacedæmonians alone, of all the Greeks, employed a kind of cypher for the instructions they sent to their ambassadors and generals. We have just observed, that it was always their great maxims to throw an impenetrable cloud over the springs and operations of their politics, which were generally of a nature incapable of supporting the light. All that appears useful, says Thucydides, passes with them for justifiable; and this machiavelism was besides frequently accompanied with great national pride, which, on the smallest check, degenerated into meanness. The Spartans had

*. Mr. Barthelemy has given an explanation of the inscriptions found at Amycles, in the XXIIId. Volume of the Academy of Belles Lettres.

written

written very laconic; or what is the same thing, very insolent letters to the republic of Thebes; but after being completely defeated at Leuctra, they began to lengthen their phrases; *and it is I*, said Epaminondas, *who have taught them this politeness.**

II.—ANALYSIS OF THE LACEDÆMONIAN GOVERNMENT.

The Greek politicians applied terms so happily invented to the different forms of government, that they have been adopted in all the languages of Europe; but the greatest among them, says Plato, could never rightly define the constitution of Lacedæmon.

In reality, it could not be expressed in one word, nor even in a few phrases, because a work, so complicated, presented itself in many different points of view.

The Helotes and the conquered Messenians experienced more despotism than ever was imposed on any people by either the Turks or Persians. The Helotes possessed nothing of their own; and while condemned, as we have observed, to cultivate the lands, as well as to perform military service, they could be butchered with

* The Greek text expresses it that Epaminondas had put an end to laconism, or the brachylogy of the Spartans.

 im-

impunity. This right, which the lords of the manors in Poland likewise dared to exercise anciently against the peasants, supposes the most frightful despotism, ever conceived by the human mind, in its greatest degree of perversity.

With regard to the tributary inhabitants of Laconia, who had no vote in the national assemblies, nor any direct part in the civil government, they experienced an oligarchy, or, in other words, the smaller number oppressed the greater, as the nobles of Venice domineer over the citizens and peasants of the continent.

The government of the real Lacedæmonians of the Doric race, who composed the ruling nation, was an imperfect democracy, kept in chains by two hereditary captain-generals, called kings. This state was so far democratic, that the people alone had the right of sanctioning the laws, of making war or peace, of creating senators, who were for life, and of electing annually the five great magistrates, called Ephori.

Thus the essence of sovereignty resided in the people, who, to restrain the ambition of their kings, were obliged to intrust a greater authority to the Ephori than ever was possessed by the chief magistrates of any republic. This system of political counterpoise was the great defect of the constitution, where recourse was had to tyranny, in order to avoid despotism.

The Ephori supplied, by an arbitrary will, the

place

place of written laws, and they had the power of life and death without admitting of any appeal, so that their authority, as Aristotle has defined it, was *isotyrannic*, or equal to tyranny. They were restricted however from commanding either the fleets or armies, and had to reside necessarily at Lacedæmon, in the same manner that the tribunes of the people could never absent themselves from Rome.

It is easy to conceive why the magistrates, whose appearance alone spread terror, could not be permitted to act as generals; for then they would have become more powerful than the republic.

The influence of the senate of Lacedæmon continued to diminish, in proportion as that of the Ephori augmented. It was, in fact, composed of twenty-eight old men, none of whom could be admitted under the age of sixty, when they began to want vigor and energy; for it is certain, says a Greek philosopher, that in man, at a certain period, the mind declines as well as the body. To prevent so great an inconvenience, these counsellors should have been elected annually, instead of remaining for life, to return to childhood, in the exercise of an important trust.

The administration of all great affairs was taken by degrees from these decayed senators, to leave them nothing more than the office of judging civil causes; and they became at last a court

of justice, rather than a political department. Thus they are scarcely ever mentioned in the history of Greece, while the Ephori, who commanded the greatest consideration, were elected only, among the plebeian families, because the nobles from theirattachment to the court faction had forfeited entirely the confidence of the people.* It is even probable, that none of the nobility could belong to the Ephori; and the Patricians at Rome were excluded in the same manner from acting as tribunes. Cicero, on this account, pretended that the election of Claudius, who belonged to a Patrician family, was null and illegal; although he had abjured his nobility, and practised the civil fiction of getting himself adopted by one of the people.†

The two kings of Lacedæmon were hereditary members of the senate; but they dared not even approach the tribunal of the Ephori, unless when specially required; and on such a summons it was necessary to comply, or a cohort of satellites would have instantly conducted them from the throne to a prison. The great magistrates had the power of imprisoning the kings; and this was regarded as the lance and buckler of liberty. But even then arms were found insufficient to resist the impulses of that kind of despotism, defined in the following

* Ubbo Emmius, *Republic of Lacedæmon.*

† Cicero, *for his House.*

terms

terms by the best politicians of Greece: it is, said they, that state, where one man governs a nation, according to maxims which are not directed to the happiness of the subject, but to the interests of the sovereign, and the reigning family.*

When the kings of Lacedæmon committed any fault, too trivial to be punished with exile or death, they were condemned to a pecuniary fine. Thucydides says, that king Agis had to pay an hundred thousand Eginian drachmæ of silver, and to have his house razed, in the same manner with that of king Leotychides.†

Agis, by his tears, prayers, and promises, succeeded in calming the people at this time; but another storm soon followed, which baffled all his address, and spread itself over the heads of his successors. These princes, in their quality of hereditary captains, possessed the exclusive right of commanding the armies; and, in the midst of a camp, they became real sovereigns, directed all military operations without control, and either fought or avoided battles as they thought proper. As Agis appeared to have abused these prerogatives, the Lacedæmonians appointed a council of ten assessors, without whose approbation nothing could be undertaken at the army.

* Aristotle, Politic. lib. III. and IV.

† Thucydides, lib. V. and Herodotus, lib. VI.

This revolution, which took place in the year four hundred and eighteen before our Era, forms a remarkable epoch in the history of Sparta. Since that period the influence of royal authority continued diminishing, until Cleomenes caused the five ephori to be massacred in open day; broke to pieces their tribunal; effaced their very name; and subjugated Sparta, as Cæsar did Rome. What Cæsar however never attempted against Pompey, Cleomenes undertook, and poisoned the last king of the branch of the Eurypontidæ, by which he, as chief of the Agidæ, became sole master in the midst of Lacedæmon.

Such was the neccessary effect of the dyarchy, or double royalty, and of that whimsical constitution, formed, as we have observed, by a concurrence of unforeseen causes and political errors. Attempts were afterwards made to correct these inconveniences, by establishing an equilibrium between the power of the ephori, and that of the kings, who constantly preferred the most uncertain wars to inactivity and peace. With all the shackles, imposed on them at different times, they were less clogged at the head of an army, than in the midst of the capital, where their ambition was curbed by the inspection of the magistrates, as boys are awed by the presence of their tutors. Thus the spirit of this military government was a disease of so extraordinary a nature, that even the sick had an interest in avoiding to be cured.

Nobility

Nobility at Lacedæmon consisted properly of the body of knights, distinguished by the name of *Hippagretes*, from the plebeians who were called *Cöres*.* The latter formed two classes, differing so far, in their privileges that the one, called *subalterns*, could only vote at the elevation of the magistrates, while the other, bearing the title of *equals*, were qualified both to vote and be elected. The dignity of ephori was the highest they could attain; and as its duration did not exceed twelve months, no time was to be lost in making a fortune, by taking every advantage of such an extensive authority, added to the general direction of the finances. The greatest disorder frequently prevailed in this department, and it proceeded chiefly from the prerogative attached to the dignity of ephori; for they were exempt from all responsibility, and never rendering any account of their conduct, they resembled the chief magistrates of Crete, called Cosmes.†

The twenty eight senators of Sparta, who held their stations for life, did not require to be so pressing as the ephori; but the means of pro-

* They are named ΚΟΡΟΙ in a fragment of Archytas, cited by Stobæus. The *equals* were called ʻΟΜΟΙΟΙ, and the *subalterns* ʻΥΠΟΜΕΙΟΝΕΣ; the latter were excluded from the public repasts as well as from the magistracy, on account of their indigence. Mr. Capperonnier was very wrong in confounding the Hypomiones with the Helotes.

† Meursius and Ubbo Emmius, on the *Republic of Crete*.

curing

curing riches, confided in them, were much less extensive. Their greatest resource consisted in different transactions with allied nations, particularly where they were prevailed on to receive money, instead of the stipulated contingents of troops; and in this case half a drachma of Egina was given for the pay of a foot soldier, and two drachmæ for that of each dragoon.*

It is easy to judge by these details, to what a pitch the spirit of venality had infected all the departments of the state. The lives of men became a kind of traffic, which above all things should have been avoided, in order to prevent the dreadful and rapid progress of depopulation. Anciently the Spartans of the Doric race, exclusive of the Helotes, could have raised an army of ten thousand warriors; but, under the reign of Agis, their whole force did not exceed fifteen hundred individuals, who were afterwards reduced to nothing; and then Laconia presented the image of the most complete desolation.

No other excuse can be imagined for those, who have praised with so much enthusiasm this form of government, than that they were ignorant of their subject; and writing, as well as

* Xenophon, *Hellenica*, lib. V. The Lacedæmonians gained considerably by such high pay; for they substituted men on much lower terms, either from among themselves or the Helotes.

judging

judging at random, their books were composed like so many dreams.

III.—COLONIES OF LACEDÆMON.

The three principal Grecian towns, regarded by the ancients as colonies of Lacedæmon, were precisely those most notorious for the excessive dissoluteness of their manners. The inhabitants of Tarentum, in the first place, celebrated so extravagantly the feasts of Bacchus, that in their fits of drunkenness, they no longer knew whether they were in Italy or Sicily; and they saw two suns, like Pentheus, or confounded mount Vesuvius with Etna. Bysantium came next, where as much wine was drank as at Tarentum; and Cyrene, the mother of luxury and effeminacy, corrupted even philosophy so far, that the sect of the Cyreneans was placed many degrees below Epicurism.

The origin of the Tarentines is not obscure, for they owed their existence, as we have seen, to the incredible debauches of the Lacedæmonian virgins. They afterwards embarked for Grecia Magna, which was then, what America is in our days; and adventurers, who had not a house in their native country, went thither to build a city. With regard to Bysantium and Cyrene,

Cyrene, we may positively affirm, in contradiction to the authority of the ancients, that they were not real colonies of Lacedæmon, neither did the weak population of that state admit of sending emigrants to people a new city.

At this day, we know exactly the method practised by the Spartans in founding the military colony of Heraclea, beyond the straits of Thermopylæ, and near the ruins of the ancient Trachis. For this purpose, they collected all the beggars and vagabonds of Peloponnesus of the Doric race, excluding entirely the Acheans, Ionians, and consequently the Athenians. The undertakers succeeded however to enrol about ten thousand persons of both sexes, of whom not perhaps forty were Lacedæmonians; and these adventurers, in the year four hundred and twenty six, went with great parade to found the town of Heraclea.*

This establishment was a colony, in all the strictness of the term, although not composed of men born in the capital. The Heracleans, however, have been erroneously regarded as springing immediately from the Lacedæmonians, who, composing a military state, undertook to form military colonies, the most unfortunate that can be represented by the imagination of man. Never on our globe did any place suffer

* Marcianus of Heraclea, in his *Periégeses*: Thucydides, lib. III. and Diodorus Siculus, lib. XII.

calamities

calamities comparable to those of Heraclea; and long details would be necessary to relate how often it was attacked, and pillaged. The Lacedæmonians, to keep it under their yoke, shed the blood of all those who testified the smallest inclination for independence; and this was the first cause of the weakness of the establishment, and the ominous fore-runner of the greatest misfortunes.

The ancients, it may safely be affirmed, followed very erroneous principles with regard to colonization; and no state in former times was exempt from irreparable faults of that nature. The Lacedæmonians lost entirely the ten thousand persons they sent to Heraclea, to secure the strait of Thermopylæ; and the Athenians sacrificed as many to as little purpose, when they took possession of the mouth of the Strymon. Tyre, by constructing Carthage, hoped to engross the comerce of Africa, when, on the contrary, it was the means of depriving the Tyrians not only of what they formerly possessed there, but likewise of their trade with Spain. Corinth was first weakened, and afterwards humbled by the colonies of Syracuse and Corcyra; for they deprived the metropolis of all the rich branches of commerce with Sicily, Italy, and the coasts of the Adriatic. The Corinthians, dazzled by their great prosperity, imagined that nothing was easier than to force Corcyra to resume its de-

dependence. They undertook therefore a bloody and expensive war, to be baffled in every attack, and in all their hopes. Miletus experienced a fate equally disastrous; for by founding towns to favor the commerce of the Euxine sea, it resembled a mother, carried to the tomb by her own children. Dwindled into a shadow, the natural goodness of its flocks and wool alone preserved the appearance of a town, on the wreck of a powerful metropolis.

Nothing was more ruinous to the Romans likewise than the colonies they formed beyond the limits of Italy; and a Latin historian conceives, that nothing more fatal was ever undertaken by the politicians of those days. Instead of concentring the nation in a space determined by nature, they dispersed it without end, until a race of hybrides sprung up, who were Romans in name, but enemies to Rome, because their interests could never be reconciled with those of the capital.

All these examples are more than sufficient to show the great difficulty of sounding the depth of a system, so extensive and obscure as that concerning colonies in general. Among the Greeks, they were of four different kinds; either military like Heraclea, commercial like Syracuse, agricultural like that of the Athenians in the Thracian Chersonesus, or finally of a political nature, founded with no other view than to ease

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the state of a superfluous population, or to free it from suspected persons. The latter were the most happy of all such establishments, because they preserved no oppressive connexion, nor any burdensome dependence; for the mother country renounced all empire over the emigrants; and we never find that Lacedæmon arrogated the shadow of dominion at Tarentum. Such was in general the condition of the greater part of the towns, founded on the coasts of Grecia Magna, and Asia Minor; and this cause must have contributed much to render them very flourishing. Some, in fact, became capital cities in their turn; peopled a number of smaller towns around them; and spread their branches on every side, like trees planted in a fertile soil.

The observation we have just made, relative to this mixture of men, collected in all the valleys of Peloponnesus, to people Heraclea, should be extended to most of the Greek colonies, which in general were composed of foreign vagabonds, more than of families originally from the same country. The only rule, carefully observed in such matters, was never to allow the Dorians and Ionians to be confounded in one establishment, because the mutual antipathy of these two nations became frequently a spirit of intolerence. It is at least certain, that one temple existed on the territory of Athens, where the priests admitted

mitted none of the Doric race; and this hatred must doubtless have greatly influenced the continual wars of the Greeks in Europe. But to examine here the true causes of the aversion conceived by the Ionians against the Dorians, would be deviating too far from the bounds of our subject, to which it is now necessary to return.

IV.—POLITICAL DISSOLUTION OF LACEDÆMON.

Never was any nation known to expire in convulsions so terrible, as those which terminated the political existence of the Lacedæmonians.

At the naval combat, on the coast of Gnidus, they lost the empire of the sea, after having usurped it for ten years; and the battle of Leuctra, followed by the loss of Messenia, left them incapable of resisting the arms of Macedonia. Antipater discomfited their army in the plains of Mantinea; and Antigonus afterwards defeated them in a more bloody action, at Sellasia, in the year two hundred and twenty two before our Era. Then king Cleomenes, who had poisoned his colleague, assassinated the ephori, and lost the capital, seeing himself without either army, resources, or hopes, abandoned Greece, to take refuge among the Egyptians, who flayed him like a wild beast; and he ended his audacity and dreadful misdemeanors on the

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patibulary stakes of Alexandria. When the Lacedæmonians heard the news of his death, so far from attempting to avenge his manes, branded with the most shameful catastrophe, they set up their royalty at auction, and sold it to the highest bidder. Such, says Polybius, was their spirit of venality and refinement in avarice, that they made a traffic of the greatest disasters, under the appearance of extraordinary good fortune.*

An adventurer, named Lycurgus, whose extraction and family were unknown, purchased the pretended monarchy, by paying a talent of Egina in silver, or about three hundred pounds sterling, to each magistrate.

This man governed like a financier, who endeavours to draw from an hazardous enterprise at least double the sum he has expended; and his reign, although of short duration, was a series of fatal events and political errors. Yet those, who had received his money, were interested in maintaining him against all the other pretenders to the throne; among whom was a child, called Agesipolis, said to be descended from the ancient Spartan kings of the race of the Heraclidæ. Whatever were the claims of this pretender, he was driven from every place in Laconia by the faction of Lycurgus; and being forced to wander all his life, like a beggar, no person could ever discover where he terminated his days.

* Polybius, Hist. lib. IV.

On the death of Lycurgus, the confusion augmented, and neither appearance of government nor shadow of legislation existed, when the state became subjugated by a well known usurper, named Machanidas, who entered into an unnecessary and unfortunate war, to lose his own life, and sacrifice a great part of his army.

Amidst this scene of horror arose Nabis, the most unnatural and sanguinary monster that ever appeared under a human form. His cruelties surpassed greatly all that had been practised by Phalaris of Agrigentum, and Dionysius of Syracuse, whose names are indeed more famous, but their crimes were neither so premeditated, nor so atrocious. He began his reign by banishing all the Spartans of the Doric race who remained at Lacedæmon; and Cretan assassins were afterwards suborned by him, to destroy those exiles to the last man.

Having extirpated in this manner the remains of that nation, as well as destroyed a great number of Helotes, Nabis attracted with magnificent promises, and still more with the hopes of impunity the vilest perpetrators of theft, sacrilege, and murder, to people Lacedæmon. Of these abandoned ruffians collected throughout Europe and Asia, he formed a corps of fifteen thousand men, who had escaped from the laws of their different countries; for not one could be found among them, says Polybius, who did not merit death by the infamy of his actions.*

* *Fragment of the XIII book of the History of Polybius.*

Such

Such were the modern Lacedæmonians, united into a body about the year two hundred and two before our Era, and very different from the ancient Spartans, of whom no vestige then remained on the surface of the earth; for they were seen expiring successively among the flames of war, which they never ceased to kindle.

No sooner was Nabis surrounded by so many satellites, who joined great intrepidity to consummate experience in crimes, than he commenced conqueror; invaded a part of Messenia; took Argos; and exacted enormous tributes from different towns in the island of Crete. Afterwards he constructed a fleet of corsairs, to cruise constantly off cape Malea, named in those days the *golden cape* from the many prizes taken there; and as Nabis had possession of the island of Cythera, it was almost impossible for any vessel to escape in those seas.

Never in Greece were such great robberies committed with so much impudence; and Lacedæmon resembled a cave, where buccaniers deposit their spoils. The wife of Nabis, who followed the same trade with her husband, collected all the ornaments of gold, silver, and diamonds, belonging to the dames of Argolis, whom she stripped in the most cruel manner. Titus Livius asserts, that many persons of the first distinction were reduced to absolute nakedness in the centre of Argos, formerly one of the richest and most superb cities of Peloponnesus.

Amidst these depredations, the tyrant invented a machine, no less terrible than the Bull of Phalaris, but by far more complicated. According to the description given by Polybius, it was an automaton, representing a woman covered with a rich drapery; and by means of concealed springs, it seized on any devoted person, held him immoveable, and at last pierced him with so many blades of pointed steel, that he expired in the greatest agonies. This punishment was reserved for those, who, refusing to satisfy the avarice of the tyrant, persisted to conceal the places, where their riches were deposited.

Those, who have doubted the truth of this atrocity, are probably in the same situation with the Sicilian Timæus, who, pretending to be well versed in historical criticism, fancied to discover his sagacity by disputing the existence of the Bull of Phalaris. He alledged, as the strongest circumstance in favor of his assertion, that no traces of it remained in Sicily. But afterwards it was found at Carthage, among other spoils transported thither from Agrigentum; and the Carthaginians, according to all appearances employed that shocking instrument in committing their children to the flames, for the glory of Moloch.

As Nabis was very fortunate in his depredations, he at length received from the court of Macedonia the title of king; but the Achæan league continued always to call him a robber.

As he interrupted the commerce of the Mediterranean, without even respecting the flag of Rome, the Romans, who had undertaken wars, says Cicero, to protect simple merchants, would not leave themselves any longer exposed to such insults; and they besieged the tyrant in his capital, where he had fortified himself, at the head of fifteen thousand men. After several bloody combats and furious assaults, he was compelled at last to accept the conditions prescribed by his conquerors. In the first place, they took away his corsairs, prohibiting him from constructing others; and they detached from the empire of Lacedæmon all the maritime places of Laconia, so long desirous of independence.

The inhabitants of the towns, delivered in this manner from the yoke of their ancient metropolis, took the name of *Eleuthero-Lacons*, or free Laconians, whose origin should be dated in the year of Rome five hundred and fifty-nine, and not in the reign of Augustus, as Pausanias pretends, through excessive ignorance of Roman History.*

This independence of the Laconians was the political dissolution of Lacedæmon, which ceased to be any longer counted among the great

* Titus Livius, DECAD. IV.

It is possible, that the emperor Augustus might have confirmed by new privileges the independence acquired by the maritime towns of Laconia, about a century before, in a solemn treaty concluded between the Romans and Nabis.

states of Greece; and its jurisdiction afterwards extended no further than to a few trifling towns.

It is sufficient to reflect on the series of events, exposed here with so much rapidity, to conceive that such must have been the destiny of a constitution purely military. Erected at first by conquests, and plunged afterwards in luxury, it expired at last amidst robberies, anarchy, perversity, and corruption; neither did such neglect of all moral principles even take place among the barbarians of the ancient continent.

No sooner was the tyrant Nabis assassinated by a band of Ætolian robbers, than the Achæan league sent an army to purge Lacedæmon of part of its profligate inhabitants. Some of them then took refuge in the maritime towns, and their connexion with the free Laconians produced the modern Mainots, concerning whom much has been spoken, and little known in Europe.

V.—HISTORY, AND MANNERS OF THE MAINOTS.

This nation, little numerous and inhabiting during several centuries the western coast of Laconia, did not descend, as has been believed, from the ancient Spartans. On the contrary, it owed its origin to the Laconians, who had shaken off the yoke of Lacedæmon, and freed themselves from the most cruel slavery.

The principal place, or capital, of the Mainots has always been the small maritime town of Oetylos, which recovered its liberty with so many others, in the manner we have already related.

As

As the Greek language has been greatly corrupted by the Mainots, they have changed the name Oetylos into *Vitulo*; and their former bishop was wont to reside there with a troop of Caloyers of the order of Saint Basil, who were as dangerous banditti as the rest of the nation. They frequently sallied forth at the head of a band of thieves, to rifle the merchants of Messenia, and the Turks of Coron. When a whole week elapsed without affording a single capture, the inhabitants of Vitulo put on mourning, and complained bitterly, that Providence seemed to have abandoned them.

The inhabitants of this corner of Peloponnesus, not contented with taking away every thing they could find on shore, committed dreadful piracies at sea, in following the maxims of the satellites of Nabis, who had incorporated themselves with the Eleuthero-Lacons. At length the coast of Maina became so formidable, that navigators dared not to approach it, even when they experienced the greatest distresses.*

To enter into some geographical details, concerning the interior parts of this small country, inhabited by so many robbers, we must figure to ourselves a flat shore of five or six leagues, extending along the Mediterranean, from the foot of mount Taygetus to the rocks of Tænarus, now called cape Matapan. The soil there is so barren, that only a few valleys are capable of

* *Webler's Voyage in Greece.*

producing barley, mulberry trees, ever-green oaks, and olives greatly inferior in quality to those of Attica.

The inhabitants of this coast were long divided into two very distinct hordes; and those of the northern part, around Vitulo, had the reputation of being less cruel and atrocious than the Mainots of the south, who are generally called *Cacovougnis*, or banditti of the mountain. Exposed almost naked to the rays of the sun, and the intemperature of the climate, in a mountainous country, they are not only very tawny, but ferocity is painted in all the features of their savage physiognomy.

It is their custom to go constantly armed, and to massacre, without mercy, those, who after having been ship-wrecked, arrive by swimming at cape Tænarus; and their stripped carcases are left unburied on this shore, where nothing is seen but objects of horror. The habitations there are wretched huts, scattered for the most part around the ruins of an ancient town of Laconia, where the Turks afterwards constructed a fort, called in their language *Turcogli-Olimionas*; while the modern Greeks, no less ignorant in geography than the Ottomans, give it the name of *Maina*; and by a strange confusion of terms that word is used to denote the whole coast.*

* *Coronelli's geographical Memoirs of the Morea.*
The position of Maina corresponds to that of the ancient town of Tænarus.

In

In the memoirs, relative to the imperial family of Comnenes, communicated to me by the goodness of Mr. de Croix, secretary to the king, at Lille in Flanders, it appears, that about the year one thousand four hundred and seventy-four, a certain adventurer presented himself to the Mainots, pretending to be son of David, the last emperor of Trebizond, of the race of Comnenes. The anonymous author, who has written the history of this unfortunate dynasty, really believes that the pretensions of this person, named Nicephorus, were well founded. But a fact of this nature, covered with so many clouds, can not possibly now be investigated among people, like the modern Greeks, who have forged so many false acts and legends, that the Caloyers of mount Athos are incapable of reading them all in the whole course of their lives.*

This Nicephorus, however, had the art to draw the bishop of Vitulo into his interests, and to get himself acknowledged as a prince descended from the imperial family of Comnenes. He assumed, in consequence of this, the title of *Proto-geronte*, which signifies, chief of the old men, or first senator of the coast of Maina, where his descendants afterwards reigned despotically. No appearance of liberty however could be traced in this form of government, where the Proto-gerontes on one side, and the clergy

* *Precis historique de la Maison imperiale des Comnènes.*

on

on the other, oppressed a nation pretending to independance.

The Sultans of Constantinople do not appear to have ever paid any serious attention to this procedure of the Mainots; and in all the great empires of Asia we find many small nations, almost in a savage state, living by rapine, and disclaiming all foreign obedience. Such are the bedouin Arabs of Turkey, the Curdes and Dolomites of Persia, the Miaosses of China, the Bils of the Mogul empire, the Mardicores of the kingdom of Guzurat, and above fifty such races of men, some of whom, surrounded by polished countries, are accused at this day of being anthropophagi. It has even been pretended, that in one thousand seven hundred and eighty-two, the gypsies, unknown to the court of Vienna, nourished themselves with human flesh in the midst of Hungary, where they had settled, after having emigrated from a canton of Indostan. In all probability they had been a horde of the Mardicores, so much spoken of in the Geographical Memoirs on India, of Mr. d'Anville, who could never discover the origin of such a nation. To me, however, it appears certain, that the Mardicores, or men-eaters of the kingdom of Guzurat, are descended from the ancient Hindoos, called Padeans, because they inhabited the banks of the river Pader; and they, according to the Greek and Latin authors, were perhaps the most terrible of all anthropophagi.

It

It is probable, that the Mainots of Laconia have likewise in their fits of fanatical fury devoured several Mahometans of the Morea; and their excesses of every kind incommoded so cruelly the inhabitants of Coron, and Modon, that the governors of these places came in the year one thousand six hundred and seventy-six to chastise them. Instead of making any resistance against the Turks, the Mainots of the north had the cowardice to abandon their country, and embark to the number of four thousand men, in six large vessels, some of which were lost before they passed the island of Corfou. The rest of this fleet, after having been tossed at the mercy of the waves over the greater part of the Meditteranean, arrived at Paonia in Corsica, where these fugitives formed a kind of colony; some vestiges of it remain atthis day.*

Among the emigrants, transported into Corsica, was a certain Stephanopoulo, calling himself Proto-geronte, or prince of the Mainots, one Partheaius pretending to be bishop of Vitulo in Laconia, and a great number of Caloyers, who soon had violent disputes with the court of Rome, because they would not pay the full price of bulls and briefs, for which the Datiry's office ever gives credit either to Greeks or Latins.

This desertion of the chiefs and all the clergy

* Boswell's *Account of Corsica*, and Cambiagi's *History of Corsica*.

of

of the northern coast of Maina threw the *Caco-vougnis*, or the inhabitants of the south, into great consternation, and they fled to the summits of the steep rocks, anciently called Thyrides, above cape Tænarus, to deliberate on their alarming situation. It was decided, that the pretended princes of the family of Comnenes, by deserting instead of defending the country, had rendered themselves guilty of high treason; and therefore the dignity of Proto-geronte was abolished for-ever. They proceeded afterwards to divide the country into four hereditary Captainries; and these, on the extinction of the male heirs, could pass to the women. In reality, about the year one thousand seven hundred and sixty-five, a widow, called Demetria, frequently headed a troop of robbers on the great road leading from Modon to Misitra; and the Knights of Malta, who came to divert themselves on the coast of Laconia, did not fail to say, that this Demetria was a heroine, who made more prizes by land, than they on the Mediterranean.

Yet the Mainots, weakened by the flight of the emigrants into Corsica, and plunged into civil wars occasioned by the creation of Captain-ries, foresaw that a situation so precarious must be of short duration; and they addressed them-selves to different sovereigs of Europe, to ob-tain what they called assistance against the Turks. We have seen a copy of the circular letter, written by them for this purpose; and in

in comparing it with different acts, drawn up in Greek by the Caloyers of Vitulo, it is impossible to discover the smallest trace of the Doric dialect, spoken by the ancient Spartans.

All these supplications proved ineffectual, except that which was sent to the court of Petersburgh; and as the Russians were then at war with the Ottomans, they wished to profit from this circumstance, by sending a fleet into the gulf of Messenia. They had soon reason, however to repent having formed any connexion with the most perfidious men on earth, whose cruelties, perpetrated at the taking of Misitra, were of the most atrocious nature. That town surrendered to the Russians in one thousand seven hundred and seventy, according to a capitulation solemnly ratified by both parties, and importing that the lives of the inhabitants should be protected. The Mainots, however, declared that they disregarded all such formalities; and when any thing of the kind was least expected, they massacred so many women and children, that blood streamed in all the houses.* After this unparalleled crime, they had the cowardice to abandon the Russians, whom they had called to their aid from the extremity of the north of Europe to the centre of Greece. In one night, all the pretended warriors of Maina deserted; and this treachery, by rendering the siege of

* *Voyage pittoresque de la Grece; and Precis historique de la maison de Comnènes,*

Coron

Coron impracticable, ruined so completely the whole expedition, that it was necessary to evacuate the Morea with a precipitation little different from a flight. Such was the last exploit by which the Cacovougnis, or banditti of the mountain, terminated their career; for the Turks have now placed them on the same footing with the other tributaries of the Sangiacat of Misitra.

To this, in reality, is reduced the history of a nation of robbers, to whom may be applied the following energetic sentence, employed by Maximus of Tyre, to describe the genius of the ancient inhabitants of Ætolia. The Athenians, said he, excel in eloquence; the Thebans in playing on the flute; and the Ætolians in the art of robbing on the highway.

VI.—CONCLUSION.

We shall terminate here this long train of discussions, relative to the Lacedæmonians, who have been for several ages the object of admiration and enthusiasm with so many prejudiced writers; but we have seen all these fables and illusions vanish so completely, that they can never more revive in the eyes of reason.

It was for the interest of humanity, that such prejudices should be dissipated as had raised the barbarous inhabitants of ancient Sparta to the same

same degree of glory with the most enlightened societies of Greece. Yet the knowledge and learning of the latter have constantly guided posterity in the culture of agreeable arts, and in the research of all the grand objects relative to philosophy and legislation; without which man may indeed exist, but he can never be either happy or respectable.

We have made known the interior state of Greece, with sufficient precision for the least attentive reader to form a judgment of what must have been the fate of that country, had the Lacedæmonians succeeded in extending every where the dark clouds of their dominion. Then, this point of the globe, instead of being for us the source of light, must have remained a barbarous region, no more incapable of exciting any interest than the revolutions of Cappadocia or Phrygia. Such conquerors, while they established the reign of ignorance, would have inevitably reduced the inhabitants to a situation no less miserable than that of the Messenians, who were lost to the Sciences and Arts as long as they remained in slavery. The grand maxim of the Spartans was to shiver with the greatest violence all the props of civil liberty; and no sooner had they invaded any democratic state, than their first step was to efface all traces of popular government, to substitute the most pernicious and oppressive Oligarchy, Such were the thirty tyrants they imposed on Athens, and

and the ten Harmostes appointed over all the countries, subjugated by the torrent of their arms, or the criminal artifices of their policy.

It may therefore be truly considered as the most fortunate circumstance for human attainments, that all the states of Greece did not fall under the dominion of the Lacedæmonians, who neither wanted inclination, means, nor ambition to effect such a conquest. But the inherent vices of their constitution weakened them so far, that they could only preserve a marked ascendancy on the continent during a period of twenty-nine years, which Demosthenes asserts to have been the term of their great preponderance. With regard to the empire of the sea, obtained at Ægos-potamos by the seductions of Lysander, it was lost ten years later at the battle of Gnidus. All efforts to re-establish the marine were afterwards ineffectual; for, in the midst of the utmost exertions for that purpose, Epaminondas destroyed the army at Leuctra. Sparta, thus plunged into the greatest misfortunes, was at last totally exterminated by the horrible tyranny of Nabis; than which no more frightful scene is exhibited, in the whole history of expiring Greece.

THE END.